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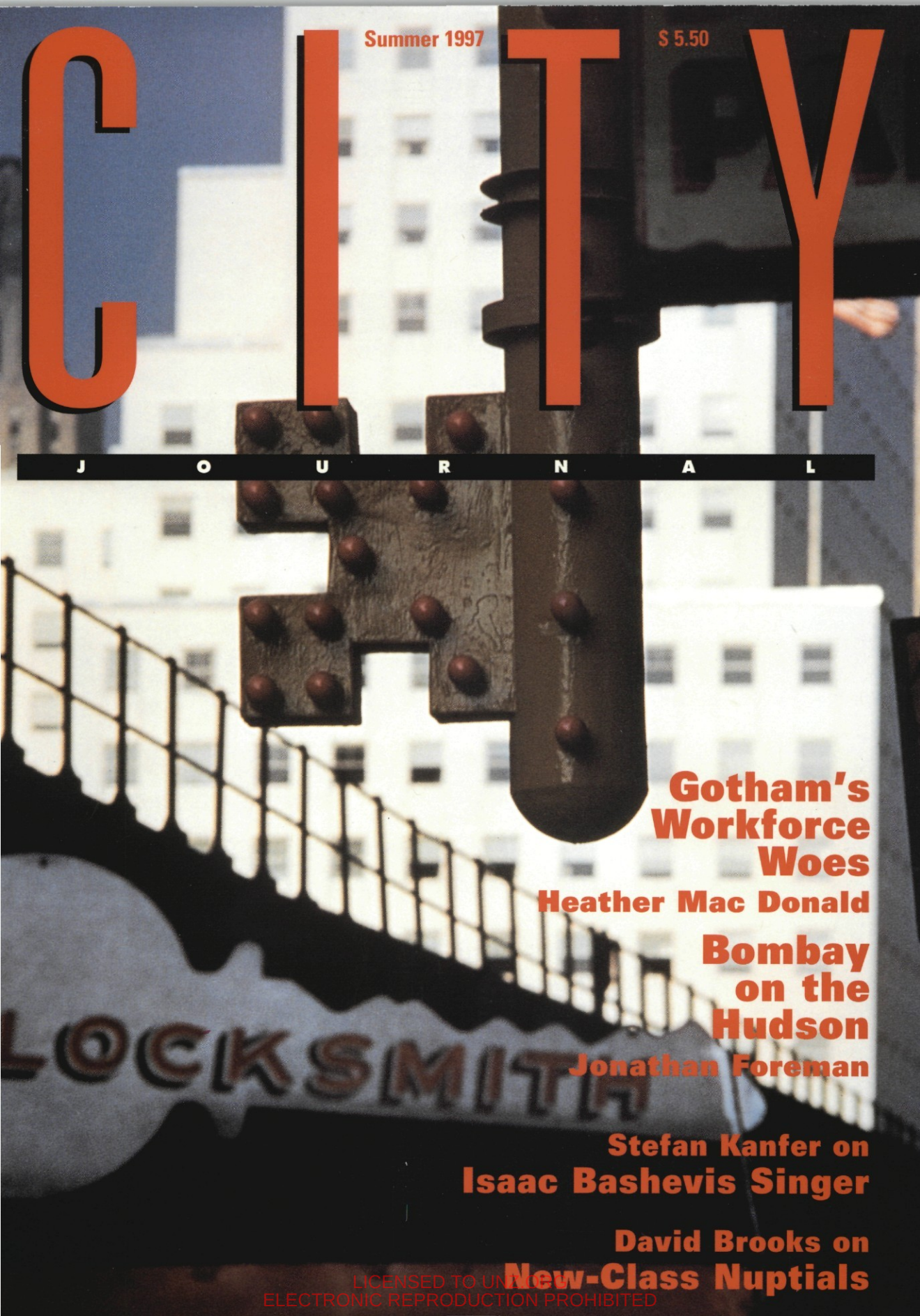

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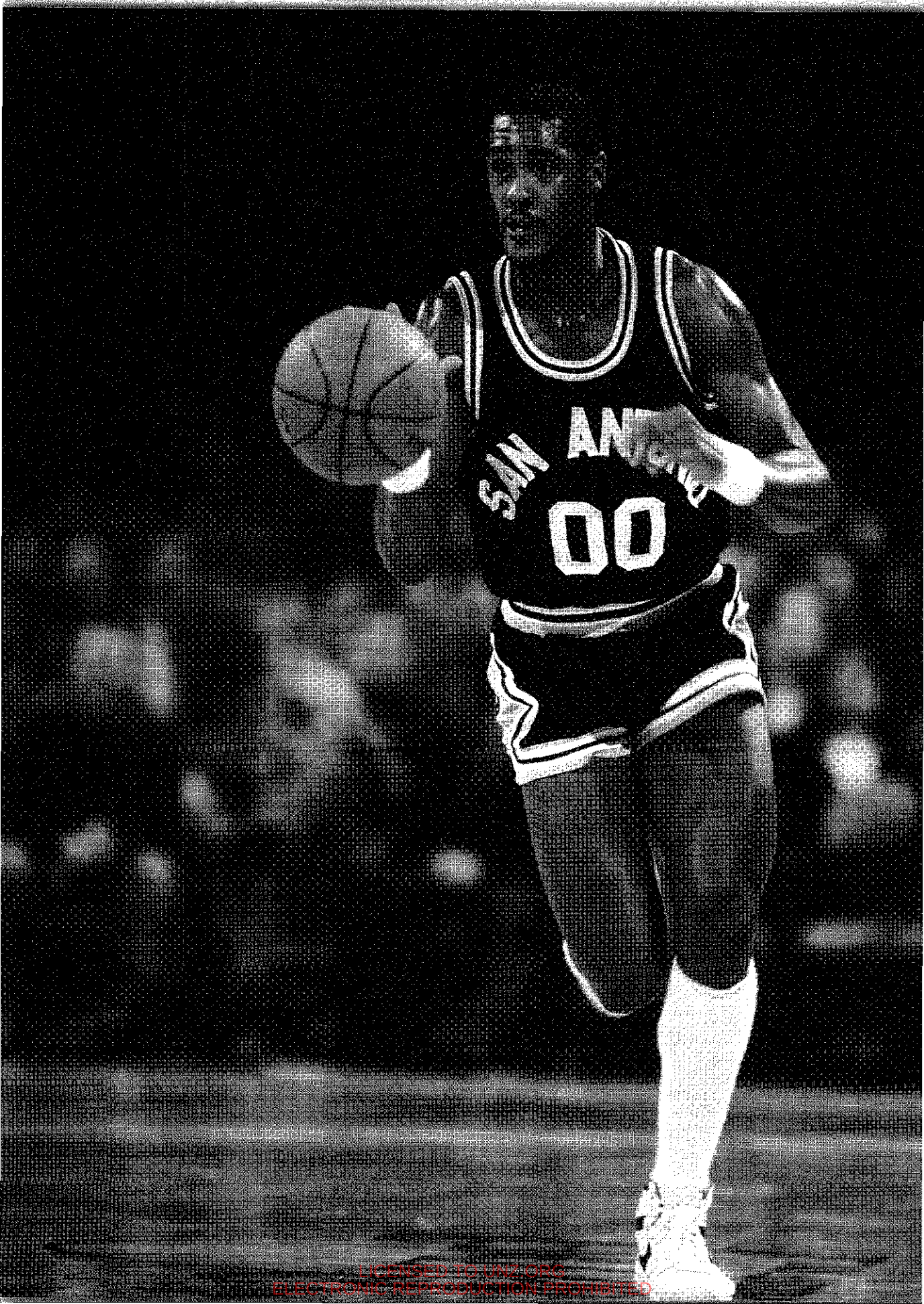

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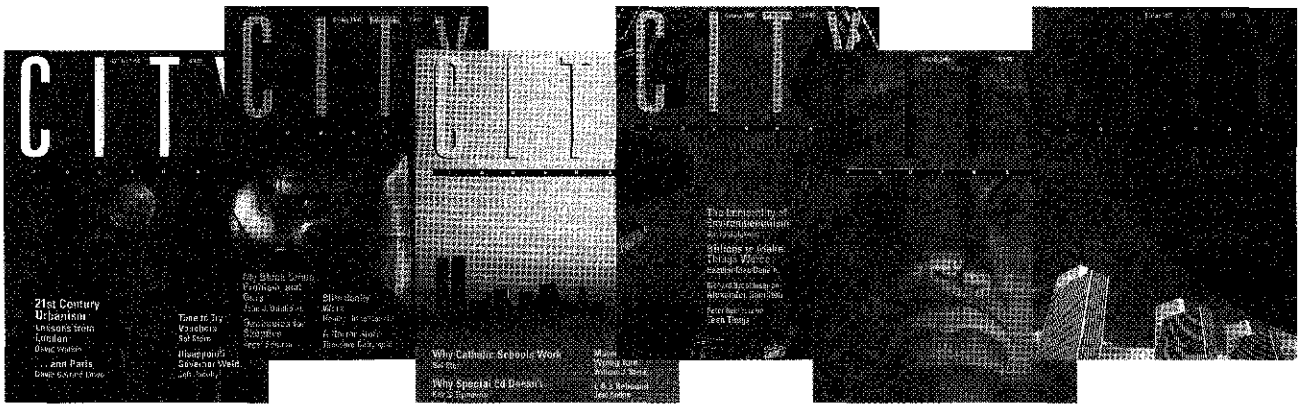

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In Prospect

Ideas have consequences, sure—but not just good or true ideas. Foolish, utterly unproven notions have vast power to shape reality and determine lives. When Keynes remarked that "practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist," he made it explicit that the ideas that impel businessmen and politicians often are not only false but wacky, "the frenzy of some academic scribbler." And yet these ideas determine policy: "the world," Keynes concluded, "is ruled by little else."

Four fascinating stories in this issue deal with the huge, unhappy consequences of wrongheaded ideas. Also fascinating, if you look at these stories in relation to one another, is how closely the wrong ideas they discuss are connected to each other. They all rest upon the notion that the standards of the mainstream community are oppressive, that the mainstream community's authority is suspect, even illegitimate. "Question authority," the mantra of 30 years ago used to say; and sure enough, in many departments of life—political, institutional, and moral—people took that advice . . . and wrought havoc.

Those who find such notions from the sixties plausible point to America's treatment of blacks as exhibit A in making their case: how much moral authority can a slavery- and Jim Crow-tainted civilization claim? That historical grievance has supplied the moral capital for Leftish causes for decades, right down to the cry that opponents of today's various sexual "liberations" are "racists." It is, in particular, a grievance at the center of the idea—family preservation—that our story on page 50, "Fatal Preservation," takes as its subject.

Family preservation—the doctrine that social service agencies should strive to bolster troubled poor families so that they can remain united, even when parents have abused their children—grew out of the claim that white social workers, applying culturally insensitive and even racist standards of judgment, were too quick to take children away from minority parents. If parents are a little short-tempered, that might be the natural result of victimization; a little support and counseling, rather than "blaming the victim," ought to turn it around. This proposition was never experience-tested wisdom but only amiable wishful thinking, at best, or (more often) hard-edged ideology. The real-world result has been a procession of children murdered by their parents (or usually their welfare-dependent mother and her current boyfriend), not to mention still more children whose lives are a long, if invisible, endurance. They may be said to be the all-too-concrete victims of an idea.

So too the mentally ill homeless, sacrificed to the idea of deinstitutionalization. This idea, as E. Fuller Torrey shows in "Let's Stop Being Nutty About the Mentally Ill" on page 67, never had a scrap of scientific validation. A handful of intellectuals asserted that the majority culture was "labeling" nonconformists as ill or turning them crazy by consigning them to oppressive mental hospitals. They needed liberation, liberation, liberation—which turned out to be the liberty to live in fear and filth in the streets and the parks, and to die there.

A different bad idea accounts for the proliferation of the homeless who are not mentally ill: the idea that as victims of a lack of affordable housing they have a right to housing on demand. Result: a New York shelter system that amounts to a $300 million annual subsidy to vice, since its residents are, overwhelmingly, drug addicts and drunks. But now, as Sol Stern reports in "*Who* Says the Homeless Should Work?" on page 74, one of the most active advocates of the old idea has had a change of heart. What the homeless need, George McDonald now says, is work and responsibility—and he has put that idea into practice in a program that is succeeding. His former comrades are incensed: what's more galling than having your most cherished idea disproved?

Finally, Kay Hymowitz shows in "Raising Children for an Uncivil Society" on page 57 that the ideology-tinged ideas of today's child psychology experts have unsettling implications for the kind of people the next generation will become. Intellectual influences, in Keynes's phrase, can't have larger, more concrete results than that. •

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Soundings

A New Lease on Ineptitude

Could Governor George Pataki and Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno have handled the fight against rent control any more ineptly or given any stronger proof of their incompetence as political generals? One wonders if they understood at all that they were entering into an epochal political battle.

Bruno announced months ago that he was prepared to let the state's rent laws sunset on June 15, when they were scheduled to expire. He would agree to a complete phase-out of the laws over the course of a year or two, he said, but that was it. For a long time he stuck to his guns, with (it should be acknowledged) admirable courage. And Pataki? A month before June 15, he publicly came out in favor of vacancy decontrol as an alternative to Bruno's free-market plan. What did they get in the end? An eleventh-hour "compromise" with Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver that allows a bit more luxury decontrol and slightly higher rent increases when tenants move out. In short, they got a bone, so they wouldn't appear to be slinking away from the negotiations with their tails between their legs. "Extremists on both sides are going to be unhappy," said Pataki in praise of the deal—as if the rest of the U.S. were dangerously radical for managing without rent control.

It didn't have to be this way. There was no reason for Pataki to weigh in so early. He could have waited until June 14, allowing Bruno's proposal to sit on the table as the Republican offer until the very last moment. Then he could have swooped in, offering vacancy decontrol as the moderate alternative to the extremes staked out by Bruno and Silver.

Nor could Bruno and Pataki be bothered to coordinate a Republican strategy to generate support outside of Albany for getting rid of rent control. The Democrats, who played the game like pros, began running lurid, mendacious television ads in New York City as early as February, describing the dislocation and astronomical rents that decontrol would supposedly bring in its wake. In the weeks leading up to the vote, they organized demonstrations in Albany and the city, parading the tenants whose lives, they claimed, stood to be wrecked.

Pataki and Bruno just sat there. Why didn't they buy some television time to put pressure on upstate Democrats, the same way Silver made things hot for New York City Republicans? You can see the ads now: Sheldon Silver comes into view, and the announcer intones, "Who is Assemblyman X working for: Shelly Silver or you?" Or: "We pay to house New York City's prisoners; do we really need to pay for its socialist rent-control bureaucracy too?" How hard would it have been to stage a counter-demonstration or two? Pataki and Bruno might have brought out the young tenants who pay higher rents because rent control has choked off the supply of new apartments, the small landlords who can't make a decent living, and the construction workers who would build all the new housing that rent control's demise would bring.

Why didn't the governor make a strong positive case in television ads that ending rent control would *increase* the supply of housing and *decrease* rents? Economists and policy wonks had already gathered up irrefutable data, and the editorial boards of the *Times*, the *Post*, and the *Daily News* endorsed their views—the first time in memory that the three papers were in agreement on a major policy issue. Even a *New York Times Magazine* cover story eloquently called for rent control's end. Yet the potential wrath of New York City voters seemed to paralyze Pataki—even though he had won the governor's office while carrying just 28 percent of the city and even though 50 percent of New York City residents said they favored vacancy decontrol.

One is bound to ask if the governor and his staff are up to mounting a concerted campaign of principle. Pataki is a 9-to-5 governor, averse to the long hours and political single-mindedness necessary to bring about true change in New York. And he has surrounded himself with unremarkable aides, men like his chief counsel, Michael Finnegan, and his

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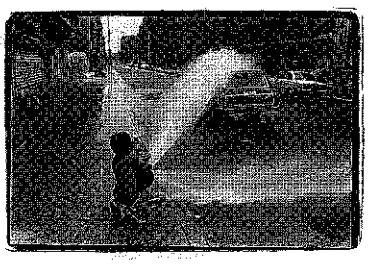
chief of staff, Brad Race. By comparison, just think back to Governor Carey's high-powered lieutenants, men of distinction like Steve Berger, John Dyson, Peter Goldmark, Robert Morgado, and Richard Ravitch.

Ending rent control has been a major goal of New York's GOP policy thinkers for years. Now Republicans are utterly discredited on the issue. It would have been better if the governor and Senate majority leader had been Democrats supporting rent control—at least that way an intellectually rigorous opposition to rent control would have continued to grow outside the political establishment. Now the cause is dead for a decade, and the state's Republican officials stand revealed as business-as-usual apparatchiks of the welfare-state status quo. —*William J. Stern*

Sins of the Sons

Though the leadership in the State Legislature has yet to agree on a package of juvenile-justice reforms, it does look as if real change is finally on its way. In Albany these days one hears far less evasive doubletalk about the "root causes" of delinquency. "Accountability" is the new buzzword—and not just for the offenders themselves. Some of the reforms on the table would take the necessary step of holding parents accountable as well. After all, if parents refuse to rein in their delinquent kids, they too should suffer some penalty.

What sorts of sanctions should parents face under a reformed Family Court Act? They should have to pay the medical costs of their children's victims and restitution for damage. They should have to participate with their offspring in counseling programs meant to discourage future encounters with the law. And they should lose entitlements, like the right to live in public housing, when their children are found guilty of committing violent crimes.



HARVEY WANG (4)

Even with the new attitude in Albany, it is unlikely that all these proposals will make it into law. Still, there are ways to use existing law to inject far more parental accountability into juvenile justice in New York. Family Court judges often release an accused offender into the custody of a parent (or other responsible adult) after informing both of them of the trial date. Some 10 percent of these juvenile offenders then fail to appear, and the court issues a warrant for their arrest. Recently the city's Corporation Counsel has also been requesting a warrant for the parent who promised to bring the offender to court. Brought before a Family Court judge on a warrant, the parent must explain the youth's failure to appear and his own inability to control the child.

Has hauling mom or pop into court in handcuffs worked? In every case so far, once a parent has been forcefully reminded of his responsibilities, the offending youth has appeared at later court hearings.

—*Peter Reinharz*

Day-Care Hype

"Quality day care" has become the refrain of child advocates in answer to the question, Who's minding the babies? It's an increasingly urgent matter, considering that more than half the mothers of children under a year old now work. Not to worry—at least if you believe our leading newspapers, which couldn't have put a more positive spin on a major new study sponsored by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. As the April headlines proclaimed, GOOD DAY CARE FOUND TO AID COGNITIVE SKILLS OF CHILDREN (*New York Times*), IN DAY CARE, QUALITY COUNTS (*Washington Post*), and GOOD EARLY CARE HAS HUGE IMPACT ON KIDS (*Wall Street Journal*).

Had reporters dug a little deeper, they might have found themselves questioning the quality-day-care dogma. The study's most significant finding? Day care, "quality" or otherwise, had strikingly little effect on the 1,356 children studied from birth to age three.

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Take vocabulary comprehension, one of the areas the study's press release touted. Quality day care (defined largely by the amount of talking and affection caregivers provide) accounted for only 2 percent out of a total 40 percent of individual differences in children at 36 months. When asked about this very small showing for quality care, Sarah L. Friedman, the study's representative at the NICHD, protested, "Every little bit matters. These numbers are statistically significant."

But significance is where you look for it. The press ignored the fact that the study offers little evidence to support the prevailing wisdom that fine early day-care programs will close the gap in cognitive development between children of poor, uneducated mothers and those of the educated middle class. The few small gains in cognitive and language development were constant across the economic spectrum. At least in the child's first three years—and for the English-speaking mothers over 18 to whom the sample was limited—variables like household income, mother's education, and psychological health far exceeded the impact of good day care, no matter how many hours a child attended. As psychologist Mark Applebaum, a member of the research team, put it: "It's like real estate agents who talk about location, location, location. Only this is family, family, family."

Does the study at least reassure working parents that they are doing their kids no harm? The answer is only a cautionary maybe. One troubling finding does show that mothers of children in day care over 30 hours a week—the situation for two-thirds of those studied—are less sensitive to their children than mothers of children in care for fewer hours, though again, the differences are tiny. In truth, the study goes to great lengths to avoid confronting the effects of full-time institutional day care, an increasingly common arrangement. Not only does it lump together all children in care over 30 hours a week, it also mixes together every kind of "nonmaternal care," throwing professional center-based care in with at-home baby-sitting by grandparents, aunts, and neighbors. At least with the data we have so far, it is impossible to distinguish between the baby of a teacher who stays with grandma from 9 AM to 3 PM, and the baby of a lawyer who stays in a day-care center from dawn to dusk. In short, contrary to the headlines, the NICHD study is barely about day care as it is commonly understood at all.

—*Kay S. Hymowitz*

When Bail Fails

Nineteen-year-old Jonathan Parker sits in jail today awaiting trial, accused of murdering decorated Buffalo cop Charles McDougald (and wounding his partner, Michael Martinez) on April 9. But after repeated run-ins with the law, what was a gun-toting, drug-dealing menace like Parker doing on the streets in the first place?

Over the previous two and a half years, police had arrested Parker on five separate occasions. Officers McDougald and Martinez brought him in the first time in October 1994, having caught him with a stolen car and 21 bags of crack cocaine. In January 1995, police found him in another stolen car, this time with a loaded .357 revolver. In February 1996, Parker used a .45 caliber handgun to shoot another man in the leg; he was also carrying 13 bags of marijuana. Four months later, police apprehended him with a 9-millimeter handgun and more marijuana. When they arrested Parker again five months later, in yet another stolen car, his weapon of choice was a .380 semi-automatic pistol.

The courts did shamefully little to stop this crime spree. Indicted for three of his offenses, Parker walked free on bail each time. In March 1997 it looked as if the law had finally caught up with him. Parker pleaded guilty to gun and drug charges and accepted a plea bargain that would put him in prison for up to nine years.

Away to a cell, right? Hardly. The judge released him on $15,000 bail, pending his formal sentencing. A month later, facing years behind bars and with nothing to lose, Parker appears to have opened fire on

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Officers McDougald and Martinez when they tried to stop him for questioning.

How could the courts free so dangerous a man even after he had pleaded guilty to such serious offenses? The answer lies in New York State law, which demands that judges base bail decisions on a single issue: the likelihood that a defendant will show up in court. As a result, they often must send proven predators back to the streets.

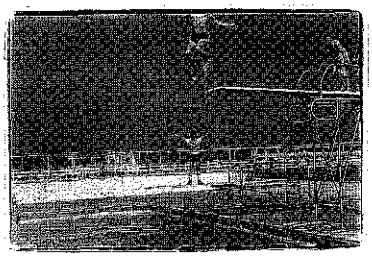
As attorney general of New York, I have urged the State Legislature to give judges and prosecutors in New York's courts the same options on bail that currently exist in the federal court system. State judges should be allowed to consider public safety when determining bail. If a criminal defendant poses a threat to an individual or to the community at large, judges should be able to set bail high or refuse it altogether. In addition, New York prosecutors should have the right to appeal bail rulings they believe unreasonable. While today defense lawyers can appeal when they think bail is set too high, prosecutors must sit by quietly when bail is set too low.

These reforms wouldn't mean abandoning the presumption of innocence. The Supreme Court held in the 1987 case of *U.S.* v. *Salerno* that it's constitutional for courts to deny bail to criminal defendants believed dangerous. Detaining a suspect does not change his rights at trial; the burden still falls on the prosecutor to prove his guilt. And the benefit to the community? Preventing deaths like Charles McDougald's.

—Dennis C. Vacco

Sorry, Charlie

Should you still entertain any doubts about the moral and political corruption of New York's welfare state, read the audit of the Harlem Urban Development Corporation (HUDC) released recently by the Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC), the state's chief economic development agency. The audit shows that in its 23-year history, during which it spent almost $100 million (unadjusted for inflation) in public money, HUDC accomplished absolutely nothing—except for the people who ran it.



HUDC's operating costs routinely ran 300 percent higher than its capital budget, meaning that personnel ate up the money intended for development. The agency had no records to support almost 30 percent of its expenditures. It repeatedly awarded non-competitive contracts to an exclusive group of vendors. It classified full-time employees as consultants, failing to withhold payroll taxes for them. It overpaid real consultants, giving them benefits like paid sick leave and vacation. And it spent $100,000 on its auto fleet, without documentation. The list goes on and on, but the picture is clear: the HUDC treated public money as one big private slush fund.

Reading the audit brought back memories for me. When Governor Cuomo appointed me head of the New York State Urban Development Corporation—the ESDC's forerunner—in 1983, I noticed that the HUDC was a subsidiary, even though it received a separate appropriation from the Legislature. I wondered why Harlem had its own UDC. Why not a Flatbush UDC or a Riverdale UDC?

I met with HUDC executive director Donald Cogsville to find out what his public-benefit corporation was doing. Mr. Cogsville didn't have much patience with me. When I asked him why he had a state car and driver, he asked me if I was a racist. When I asked him what HUDC did with the state money it received, he replied that it had some big projects in mind but in the meantime maintained a "spruce-up" effort.

After meeting with Cogsville I called Cuomo's chief of staff, Michael DelGiudice. I asked him for the story on HUDC. He said, "Bill, HUDC is Charlie"—Charles Rangel, that is, the longtime congressman from Harlem. HUDC was a patron-

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age machine for Rangel's local cronies. That, after all, is how he functions in Washington too. He's the welfare-state counterpart to the Oklahoma oil senators of old. But Rangel's industry is government. An enormous share of the registered Democrats in his district are government employees, employees of nonprofit corporations funded by government, or recipients of government transfer payments. Rangel is for any and all government spending.

The Pataki administration deserves full credit for putting an end to the disgraceful HUDC boondoggle. But now the governor must go further and examine *all* the state's economic development authorities and public-benefit corporations. Despite massive state spending on projects like the World Trade Center, the South Street Seaport, and the Javits Convention Center, New York City has an unemployment rate almost twice the national average and 400,000 fewer private-sector jobs than it had in 1967. We don't need economic development agencies; we need lower taxes, simplified regulations, good schools, public safety, and a decent quality of life—in short, all those things that allow market economies to thrive. —*William J. Stern*

Work Fair?

Laws dictating a "prevailing wage"—whereby private government contractors have to use *union* pay scales—have long inflated the cost of construction for public works. Now this dreadful idea is about to destroy welfare reform in New York City. A State Supreme Court judge ruled in May that the city must pay welfare recipients a prevailing wage for their workfare assignments. The city currently calculates the hours a welfare recipient must work by dividing the minimum wage into his monthly grant; now it will have to divide by the same wage that city workers in comparable jobs receive. The result: far fewer hours.

One might easily mistake Judge Jane S. Solomon's decision for judicial activism—but it's not. She grounded her ruling on solid authority. In its wisdom, the State Legislature declared in 1990 that localities have to base their calculation of workfare hours for AFDC recipients on the minimum wage or the wage received by public employees in the "same or similar occupations," *whichever is higher*. A 1995 state regulation says essentially the same thing for Home Relief, the state welfare program for childless single adults, as does a dubious (but still binding) 1977 State Supreme Court decision based on the State Constitution.

The state and city argue that workfare assignments do not, in fact, replicate government jobs. Indeed, participants in workfare work far fewer hours, are held to much lower standards, and assume far less responsibility than city workers. As the state and city see it, since there are no civil-service categories that match the work done by welfare recipients in every particular, the government should be free to use the minimum wage in calculating required hours.

This would be a convincing argument, except that it renders meaningless the relevant statute and regulation. A workfare position will hardly ever be an exact copy of a city job; the Legislature and state social services agency must have assumed that a rough correspondence would suffice. They clearly intended to impose a prevailing wage, undoubtedly hoping to score points with municipal unions at a time when welfare reform was still only a dream.

Now that welfare reform has become a reality, these decisions are coming back to haunt those who made them. The federal welfare reform law requires AFDC recipients to work 30 hours a week by the year 2000. But under the prevailing-wage decision, the city will have to cut almost in half the mere 20 hours a week that welfare recipients are currently working. Paying them a union wage for more hours would be unaffordably costly.

The public officials who've toiled so hard to bring about welfare reform must see to it that they have the tools to make it work. For the governor and Legislature, this means repealing the law and regulation underlying Judge Solomon's

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decision. For the city, it means challenging the 20-year-old court ruling that ties its hands on Home Relief. For all of them, it means making the all-important argument that there is a world of difference between workfare and work.

—Heather Mac Donald

Special Ed and the Feds

An unwritten law of New York City politics has it that all issues eventually boil down to race and poverty. Special education is no exception. Though in theory an educational program for disabled children—those who are deaf and blind, or afflicted with autism or cerebral palsy—in practice special education in New York City has developed into a vast educational gulag for poor, hard-to-teach minority children. This is an especially cruel irony, since the segregation of so-called "educable mentally retarded" minority students helped spark the drive for special ed more than 20 years ago. Now the federal government has gotten wind of the situation, and it is none too happy.

In a recent report, the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) documented the racial disproportion in New York's special-ed system. Blacks and Hispanics make up 73 percent of the Board of Education's nearly 1 million students. Yet in special ed, they constitute 82 percent of the children labeled learning disabled and 89 percent of those deemed emotionally disturbed.

Invoking Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, OCR reached a "memorandum of understanding" with the Board of Education, committing the city to reduce the number of minority kids in special ed. The memorandum reinforces some of the sensible measures that Schools Chancellor Rudy Crew had already announced last fall

for revamping the system, including early intervention for children with emerging academic and behavioral problems and more systematic testing to evaluate the progress of children already in special ed.

Unfortunately, the OCR memorandum will also add still more paper-shuffling busywork to special ed's bureaucratic bloat. The Board will now have to keep track of the race, ethnicity, and language of every student referred to and placed in special ed in each of the 32 school districts and in preschool; it must also analyze this data twice a year. More ominously for those familiar with the *Jose P.* consent decree, which has kept special education in New York under the control of the courts for the past 18 years, OCR will closely monitor the memorandum's implementation over the next three years and will "immediately reopen the case" if the Board is not progressing to federal satisfaction. It doesn't take a psychic to foresee more regulations, more records, more timetables, and more supervisors—in other words, *Jose P.* all over again.

The greatest danger posed by federal intervention in the miserable morass of special education is that it will harm the kids it sets out to help. Though the memorandum never says so explicitly, it implies that the disproportionate number of minority children in the system is simply a result of discrimination. But teachers, supervisors, and outside researchers describe a very different problem: children sent off into special ed because they live in such chaotic homes and neighborhoods that they are ill-prepared for sitting still in a classroom, much less doing actual schoolwork. If the federal government refuses to see this deeper reality, it will undermine efforts to face the situation squarely and to develop flexible approaches to aid these kids. *—Kay S. Hymowitz*

Substandard

The perennial question for the City University of New York—just how low have academic standards sunk?—received a depressing new answer this

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May. Just before commencement, CUNY's trustees learned that Hostos Community College, the city's only bilingual college, was allowing its students to graduate without passing a standard English proficiency exam. Because so many of its students had been failing the exam, Hostos had simply waived it.

With just a week to go before graduation, the trustees declared that no student would receive his diploma without first passing the exam, which they offered again on an emergency basis. As quickly as you can say "Al Sharpton," the city's Hispanic politicians were charging racism, and activists had filed a civil rights suit on behalf of CUNY's linguistically challenged students. A court may indeed be the Hostos students' best hope for graduating, since only 13 of the 104 last-minute test takers passed the exam.

More astonishing than the college's suspension of the test was the supposed "proficiency" necessary to pass it. According to CUNY's official grading criteria, a student may pass the essay exam if his grammar is "usually, although not always, correct" (an occasional "they is" or "he give" is no big deal); if he has "generally demonstrate[d] through punctuation an understanding of the boundaries of the sentence" (don't fret if a sentence or two ends in a comma); and if the student spells "common" words with a "reasonable degree of accuracey" (oops, make that "accuracy").

This bundle of excuses and loopholes is the English standard that CUNY professors shrilly denounce as racist, unduly difficult, and, as one put it, a "tactic of the neo-Puritan right wing." By coming to the defense of minorities who can't read and write, they flatter themselves that they are furthering some multicultural revolution. Unless the CUNY trustees can somehow change this destructive delusion, their welcome and long overdue campaign to raise the university's academic caliber will founder. Employers don't want to be told that CUNY graduates can *usually* communicate in English; they want to know that they *always* can.

—*Heather Mac Donald*

Telecosm NYC

The big telecom merger in 1993 was going to join Bell Atlantic with Tele-Communications Inc. (TCI)—the cable company that serves 820,000 subscribers in New Jersey, Long Island, and Rockland and Westchester counties. But federal regulation of cable service kicked in right around then, cable stock values crashed, and the merger collapsed.

The Federal Communications Commission left one corner of the cable business—data transport—pretty much unregulated, however. Cable-modem technology has caught up, and cable stocks are suddenly very hot—with important consequences for New York. In early June, TCI announced a swap that, if approved, will hand over its ten New York–area cable systems to Cablevision in return for a 33 percent stake in the company. This will boost Cablevision's metro New York customer base from 1.7 million to over 2.5 million homes. Meanwhile, state regulators and the Department of Justice have cleared the Bell Atlantic/NYNEX merger. The stage is being set, at last, for a pitched competitive battle.

It won't involve your television or your phone—at least not the way you think—but you won't care. The future of telecom is headed for the Web. Your Web browser already delivers perfectly good live radio from San Francisco, and television too, though in very slow motion. And you can already use that same browser for phone calls, though not yet very conveniently.

Speed up the connection enough, and the browser will do it all: phone calls as easy as ever, the Yankees live and crisper than television, and Web pages flipped as quickly as the pages of a magazine. Voice and pictures will just get folded into high-speed digital data, the new universal medium of electronic communication. That's where every New York telecom company is headed, whether its old network is wired or wireless, phone or cable, copper, coaxial cable, or glass. Wall Street has had high-speed digital links for years, and paid for

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them dearly. Pretty soon, they're going to be cheap and ubiquitous.

Bell Atlantic/NYNEX has already signed major contracts for the equipment needed to push broadband digital services out to residential customers. In 1995 Cablevision began providing high-speed Internet access (some 50 times faster than current phone lines) to residential subscribers in Yonkers and Long Island and has since added service to homes in Oyster Bay. The company is committed to upgrading its entire New York network, including the TCI properties, within the next couple of years. Time Warner will offer comparable service in Manhattan and parts of Brooklyn and Queens.

Though Seattle, Palo Alto, and Hollywood have their talent too, New York remains, by a wide margin, the information capital of the world. The new barons of bandwidth—Cablevision, Bell Atlantic/NYNEX, Time Warner, and AT&T—know it. If government regulators of the telecosm only let them loose, the city will get digital bandwidth faster, more cheaply, and more abundantly than anyone else, because there is so much to compete for and the competition will be fierce. That bandwidth will link the wealth-creating talent of Madison Avenue, Broadway, Wall Street, and Silicon Alley to the planet. The city will prosper as never before.

—Peter Huber

Christo's Dirty Laundry

Every few years the Bulgarian-born artist Christo pops into the news with another of his "environmental art" projects. You may recall the acres of day-glo pink fabric that he used to frame several islands in Miami's Biscayne Bay back in 1983 or perhaps the thousands of yellow and blue umbrellas that he scattered across the countryside of California and Japan, re-

spectively, in 1991 in a gesture of trans-Pacific unity. Christo and his wife and collaborator, Jeanne-Claude, who live in Soho, have now set their sights on their city of residence. They propose *The Gates: Project for Central Park, New York.*

What do they have in mind for beautifying Olmsted and Vaux's masterpiece? Fifteen thousand steel gates, straddling the park's 20 miles of walkways, each one consisting of two thin, 15-foot-high poles with another pole across the top. A large saffron-colored nylon panel would hang from each crossbar. The "installation" would stand for two weeks. To visualize it, imagine all the Buddhist monks in Tibet descending on the park and hanging out their robes to dry.

Christo and Jeanne-Claude's post-modern clotheslines deserve a resounding no from the city—just like the one they got more than 15 years ago, when they first proposed the project. At the time, Parks Commissioner Gordon Davis rightly concluded that the city shouldn't make a practice of turning over its green space to every art-world crank who wants a grand canvas. One might add that the massive gates would block sight-lines and impede biking and Rollerblading in the park.

Last time "the permit process was too public," Christo told me. "It was overexposed." This time he has concluded that a stealth strategy will work best. He will work behind the scenes, discreetly pressing for the necessary city permits.

Parks Commissioner Henry Stern opposes *The Gates*, but he knows that Christo and Jeanne-Claude have overcome greater odds before. In 1995 they persuaded the German legislature, after two decades of unsuccessful lobbying and over Chancellor Helmut Kohl's vociferous objections, to let them wrap the Reichstag—yes, the whole building—in a giant silver tarp. "If they could conquer the Reichstag," says Stern, "how can we know the park is safe?"

—E.V. Kontorovich

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Bombay on the Hudson

Jonathan Foreman

A half-million immigrants from the Indian subcontinent have revitalized New York's neighborhoods and breathed new life into its economy at every level.

You don't have to be a demographer to know that more and more New Yorkers these days come from the Indian subcontinent. Just hail a taxi in midtown: chances are, you'll find a man named Sarabjit, Uday, or Ali behind the wheel. The legions of South Asian taxi drivers are the most visible sign of an immigration that has been going on for more than three decades now. Today newcomers from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh are a vital component of New York's mosaic: their vibrant communities enliven every corner of the city.

Begin in Manhattan, where Bangladeshis have settled into the old tenements of the Lower East Side and lined 6th Street in the East Village with their "Indian" restaurants. Then take the Number 7 subway across the East River to Long Island City, Queens, another Bangladeshi neighborhood, where new stores, auto workshops, and taxi garages are quickly supplanting abandoned factories and warehouses. If you continue on the Number 7—popularly known as the "Orient Express"—you'll find that Jackson Heights now contains a teeming and prosperous Little India whose turbaned Sikhs and sari-clad women make the main strip feel like Delhi's Chandni Chowk or one of Bombay's upscale shopping districts. Finally, hop on the B train to Coney Island Avenue in Brooklyn's East Flatbush. There Pakistanis have revitalized block after block, festooning their new storefronts with Urdu script.

South Asians have sunk roots in New York neighborhoods from Gramercy Park, Astoria, and Flushing to Brighton Beach, Richmond Hills, and Jamaica. All told, the city's population now includes some 500,000 souls—half of them Indian, the other half almost equal parts Pakistani and Bangladeshi—who come from the lands that formed the British Dominion of India until 1947.

But New York's South Asians are not just another large and exotic addition to the city's ethnic mix. They have prospered mightily in Gotham, as they have elsewhere in the United States. Their varied ranks include not only hardworking taxi drivers and shopkeepers but also thousands of accomplished engineers and entrepreneurs, physicians and academics. And their children excel in school, quickly entering the American mainstream.

Photographs by Harvey Wang

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Anu Anand, 25, studies Indian classical dance with her mother, Lakshmi.

What explains their success? South Asians have a double cultural advantage. They arrive not only with all the traditional immigrant virtues but also with an invaluable cultural and educational legacy from the days of British rule. That doesn't make assimilation an easy, trouble-free process for them, of course. As with other immigrant groups, it takes a painful toll. But the astonishing rise of these newly made Americans shows how resilient the American Dream remains and how much the nation benefits from an influx of such energetic new residents.

In 1965 Congress passed the Immigration Reform Act, an effort in part to deal with labor shortages in certain technical fields. The new law opened

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the door to the subcontinent's doctors, engineers, and pharmacists, accelerating a "brain drain" that began in 1947 and still afflicts the region. By the early 1970s, Indians, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis—most of them highly trained—had established a modest foothold in the U.S. of some 45,000 residents. A decade later the South Asian community was around 500,000 strong.

By then the professionals who had come to the U.S. with little more than their talents had prospered and become citizens, enabling them to take advantage of the family-reunification provisions of the 1965 act. Thus began the second wave of immigration from the subcontinent, a gathering surge of brothers and sisters, cousins and in-laws. The result: a combined South Asian population in the U.S. that today exceeds 2.5 million. Indians alone now constitute a bigger American minority than Koreans or Vietnamese, and in New York they outnumber Koreans by 20 percent.

If the typical first-wave immigrant was a much-sought-after pediatrician or chemical engineer, the second-wave immigrant is likely to be less educated and less proficient in English. But make no mistake: the second wave hardly represents the subcontinent's poor, huddled masses. Almost all South Asian immigrants to the United States come from the region's English-speaking middle classes, from families able to send at least one child to college (many of the cabbies really do have degrees). As Farooq Bhatti, founder of New York's Pak Brothers Taxi Driver Union, explains, the rural poor of India and Pakistan are far too destitute to obtain a tourist visa and a plane ticket—or even a bus ticket from their villages to Bombay. Like the upper classes of these countries—who enjoy lives of extraordinary luxury and privilege—the very poor don't emigrate.

The social gulf between the two generations of immigrants can be profound, deepened by the rapidity of the first wave's success in "Amreeka." Ram Iyer, an Indian-born social worker who deals with South Asian families in New York, talks about a "disowning factor." As he explains: "People are embarrassed by their relative who works in a gas station." But such embarrassment is far from universal. For instance, Rahaul Merchant—who came to the U.S. in 1979, got a degree in computer science and an MBA, and is now head of technology at Sanwa Financial Products on Wall Street—is proud of his brother, who owns a convenience store in Queens. Merchant was pleased to have his siblings (two sisters came over as well) stay with him until they found their feet. The family still invariably comes together every Thanksgiving and Christmas, and, says Merchant, "we always talk on Divali," the Hindu festival of lights.

South Asians of both waves have wasted no time in climbing the American ladder of success. The 1990 census reported a median family income for Indians living in the U.S. of $50,000, compared to $35,000 for native-born Americans. Sixty percent of them had at least a bachelor's degree, and over a third had a graduate degree. Still more impressive, perhaps, this year the children of Indian immigrants won four of the ten prestigious Westinghouse prizes for high school scientists and placed second and third in the National Spelling Bee.

The cultural afterglow of the British Raj accounts for some of this rapid ascent. It is rare to find a South Asian immigrant who cannot speak at least some English—an enormous advantage. No less ingratiating in an America where language and manners seem to grow coarser by the day, most adult South Asians comport themselves with a certain old-world politesse, a courtesy redolent of Victorian tea parties. The consuming passion across the entire South Asian community for the game of cricket is emblematic: a slow, almost ritualistic sport of arcane rules, it typifies the immigrants' devotion to order and fair play, civility and good form. Finally, of course, South Asian newcomers tend to adjust quickly to the American political and legal scene: most have had experience with democracy and the rule of law, however imperfectly the post-independence regimes of the subcontinent have realized such ideals.

It is also hard to dispute the claim, common among South Asians, that America has received the cream of the subcontinent's migrants. Many

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"Mo" Khan, like many other Pakistanis, has made a place for himself in the newsstand business.

of them have indeed demonstrated unusual initiative and perseverance to come here, and they have done so in order to build lives unimaginable back home. Thirty-five-year-old Joginder Singh, a Sikh taxi driver from the Punjab, has been in the U.S. for seven years and plans to stay. He started out making sandwiches at a Blimpie's, drove a limo for a while, and now, like many Americans, dreams of moving to California. "There are more opportunities here," he says. "It really pays you if you want to work." The now-prosperous technologist Rahaul Merchant agrees: "I started from scratch. For the first few years I had nothing in my pocket. I could hardly afford French fries. But I made a go for myself. It's the meritocracy that attracts people like me."

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The first decades of Indian independence were especially cruel to such strivers. The Congress Party subjected the new country to one socialist experiment after another, including nationalization. Protectionist policies and an obsessive fear of multinational corporations kept out capital, products, and ideas from abroad. And the so-called "licensing Raj" made setting up any kind of business a bureaucratic nightmare, made worse by endemic corruption and nepotism. By the mid-sixties, India couldn't even keep pace with other developing nations like Turkey and Mexico. In the last several years the country's political elite has begun to open up the economy, but India still has far to go if it is to hold on to its entrepreneurs. As the Indian-American novelist Bharati Mukherjee says of one of her characters who emigrates to the U.S., "Success had meant to him escape from the constant plotting and bitterness that wore out India's middle class."

The Hindu caste system has done even more than socialism and bureaucracy to stifle Indian enterprise and social mobility—and to drive out the ambitious. A complicated form of hereditary ranking linked to occupation, caste effectively sets Hindu society in stone. As a guest at a Brahmin house in Rajasthan, I once watched in amazement as food spilled on the floor one hot afternoon remained there for hours: the servant whose role it was to clean up was out. Under this rigid system, any effort to improve your status is pointless—once a member of the floor-mopping class, always a member of the floor-mopping class. Such distinctions exact an enormous psychological toll on those of higher rank as well. The British author V. S. Naipaul, an Indian born in Trinidad, has noted that Indian scientists who win Nobel Prizes for work done abroad go home and produce little of value ever again; achievement ceases to have any bearing on their social standing.

The concept of caste is particularly hard for Americans to understand, the U.S. being in so many ways the antithesis of a caste culture. Indeed, caste identities tend to dissolve quickly once Indian immigrants arrive, in part because it becomes impractical to follow the system's elaborate codes of purity. Traveling abroad was itself once considered a defiling experience. After decades of official disapproval, caste is finally losing its grip in India—but not fast enough for thousands of middle-class emigrants.

Physicians were among the first to flee the subcontinent and the earliest Indian immigrants to flourish in the U.S. Today the 32,000 Indian doctors practicing here are a formidable presence in the profession, especially among anesthesiologists, 10 percent of whom are Indian. With years of experience in the U.S. and plenty of money, they are an unrivaled organized influence in their community, acting through the powerful American Association of Physicians from India.

Dr. Mukhund Modi, an ethnic Gujarati from Bombay, has practiced pediatrics in the tough Brooklyn neighborhood of East New York for 25 years. Working in the borough was not his first choice, but he did his residency at King's County Hospital there and decided to "hang around" while his wife, a pathologist, completed a fellowship at Columbia. "I went for the first five years thinking I would go back to India and live happily ever after," he says. "I think that was true of most of my Indian colleagues too. But this country has given us a lot. Things changed—we had kids. It wasn't a sudden decision. The opportunities we had here and the quality of life were very important to us." His wife now works at University Hospital on Staten Island, where the Modis have lived for the past 19 years.

Modi has gradually come to identify with his new country. Though he remains the head of a New York organization that raises funds for the BJP—India's Hindu nationalist party—he is also involved in local Republican politics, having long been good friends with his next-door neighbor, Staten Island borough president Guy Molinari. After many years Modi has finally decided to become an American citizen. "I didn't apply before because of the dream of going back to India," he says. "Now I feel that I'll go back to visit but not to stay forever, so why should I lose the chance to vote in the U.S.?" Like many Indian professionals, he and his wife have settled comfortably into suburban life. They sent their daughters to local pub-

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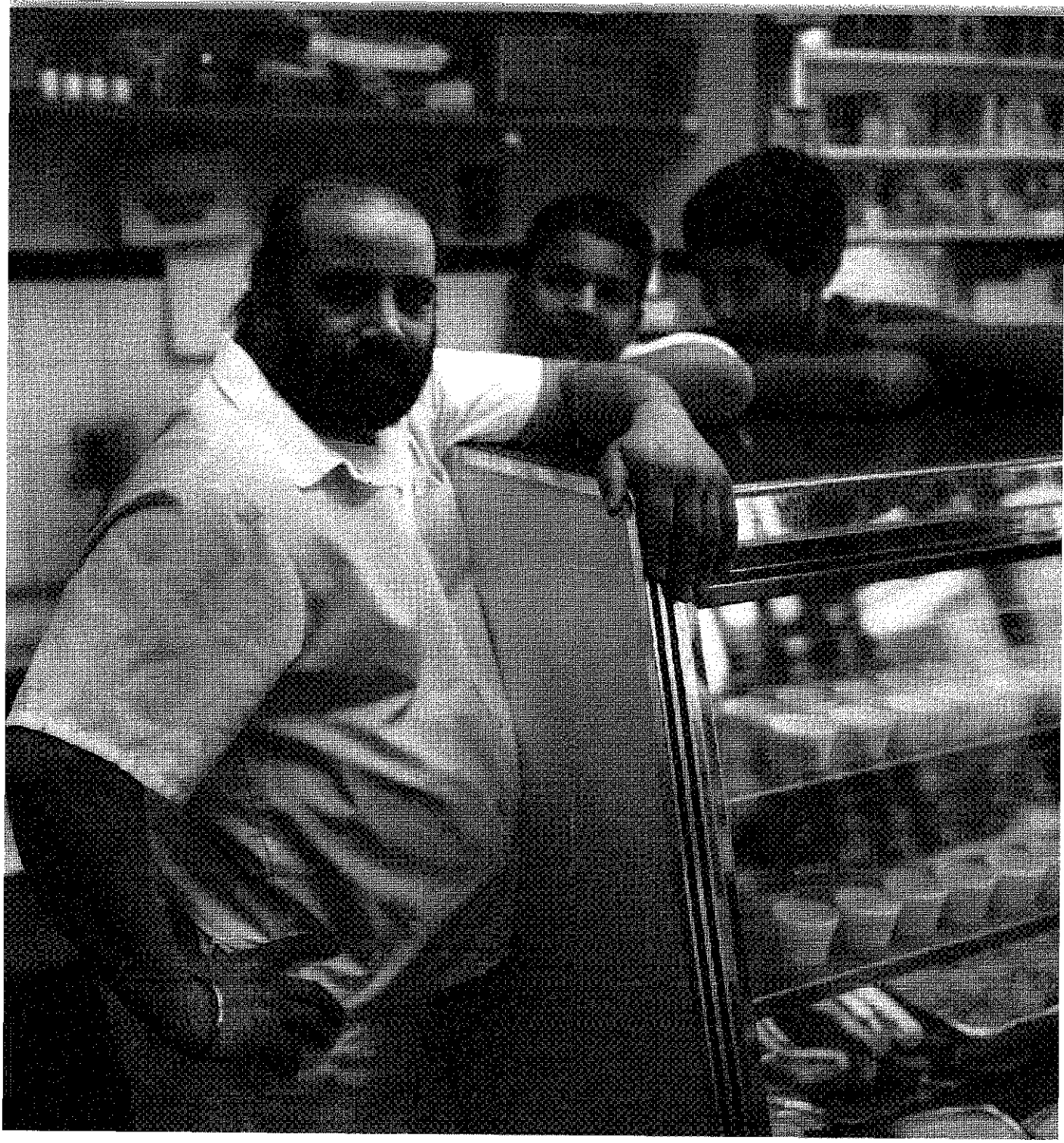

Many recent immigrants from the subcontinent work in delis and small restaurants.

lic schools—after a stint in Catholic primary schools—and then on to Amherst and Wesleyan. "Indians are typical middle-class people," observes Modi. "We want a house, a good school, and a safe neighborhood. I'd call that the American Dream."

Dr. Unni Moopan, a urologist and general surgeon who teaches at the Brookdale University Hospital in Brooklyn, remembers well the advertisements for doctors in the Indian press that drew him from the southwestern state of Kerala to America in 1976. Already a surgeon in India, he came for additional training and to do research. Five years later he had become a U.S. citizen. "The best part about New York is its mixture," he says. "You don't feel as though you are in a thoroughly

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foreign place suddenly. In New York everybody can feel at home. You are not the odd one, standing out in the crowd." Moopan and his wife lived in Brooklyn and Queens before moving to Hewlett, Long Island, attracted by the public schools. The father of two children, he knew just what he was looking for when it came to their education: "The class size is small, and the rate of going to Ivy League schools is very high."

Engineers formed a second large contingent in the professional exodus from the subcontinent. Today more than 20,000 Indian engineers work in the U.S., many of them graduates of the elite Indian Institutes of Technology. Unable to find work at home, these superbly trained technologists have made key contributions at such American high-tech giants as Sun Microsystems, Intel, and Bell Labs. The U.S. job market continues to place a premium on computer experts from South Asia, who now outstrip physicians among the professionals who choose to emigrate.

Kersh Birdie came to the U.S. in 1971, an early refugee from India's high-tech sector. Formerly a partner at First Boston and head of technological development at Morgan Stanley, he took an MBA at night and now runs his own software and consulting company, Northstar Technologies, which employs 25 people in Manhattan. "Back in India they have tremendous computer-science education," says Birdie. "They can compete with anybody. But in the Third World, opportunities were very limited in the technology business. Coming here was great—the market was wide open. I made up my mind to stay as soon as I got here, and I became an American as soon as I could." Many others followed suit, Birdie notes, reeling off a list of senior Indian technologists at Wall Street firms like Fidelity, First Boston, and Bankers Trust.

South Asian immigrants who lack professional qualifications have gone into an array of traditional immigrant occupations. Crucially for the day-to-day life of New York City, they have nearly taken over the taxi industry: some 30,000 of the city's 45,000 yellow-taxi drivers are now of South Asian descent. When a Pakistani "taxiwallah" was murdered in 1993, as many as 10,000 drivers protested outside City Hall. As for service, this takeover has made it almost universally possible once again for drivers to communicate with passengers in English.

Gaining entry into the taxi business is easy, but it's a grueling way to make a living. After getting a New York hack license—a process that takes about six months—a new immigrant will lease a medallion taxi, keeping what he can, after expenses, from fares and tips. In a slow seven-day week, a cabbie can make as little as $300, which partly explains why so many of them compete recklessly for fares. "You must remember that we have the medallion owner on our back," says a Bangladeshi driver named Imran. "I pay $112 per day for the cab, $3 for the union, $20 for gas, and $10 for food—plus taxes, TLC tickets, parking violations, and summonses. I'm driving 90 hours a week, and I cannot make $2,000 a month."

It's a physically and mentally exhausting job. Because the city has so few public restrooms, every cabdriver must carry a mental list of restaurants whose facilities he can use—without getting a parking ticket or a Taxi and Limousine Commission citation, which means at least a day of lost income. The rudeness of city officials, especially the police, baffles and pains the South Asian drivers. A Pakistani driver called Ahmed told me he was "stunned" the first time a cop told him to "move your fucking car." The cabbies often find their passengers abrupt and unfriendly too, especially by South Asian standards. And because impatient passengers and their own financial interest push them to drive as fast as they can, they live in fear of tickets.

Taxi driving tends to be a bachelor's profession, a fallback job for younger men in need of work. A Bangladeshi named Rahim came to New York to study aeronautics but had to drop out of school and start driving a cab. "I needed more money," he tells me over a 2 AM dinner at the Kasturi restaurant on Lexington Avenue, a favorite hangout of Bangladeshi drivers. "My family back home is dependent on me." Ponytailed, bespectacled, and sweatshirt-clad, he looks like a graduate student. Rahim lives with four Bangladeshi

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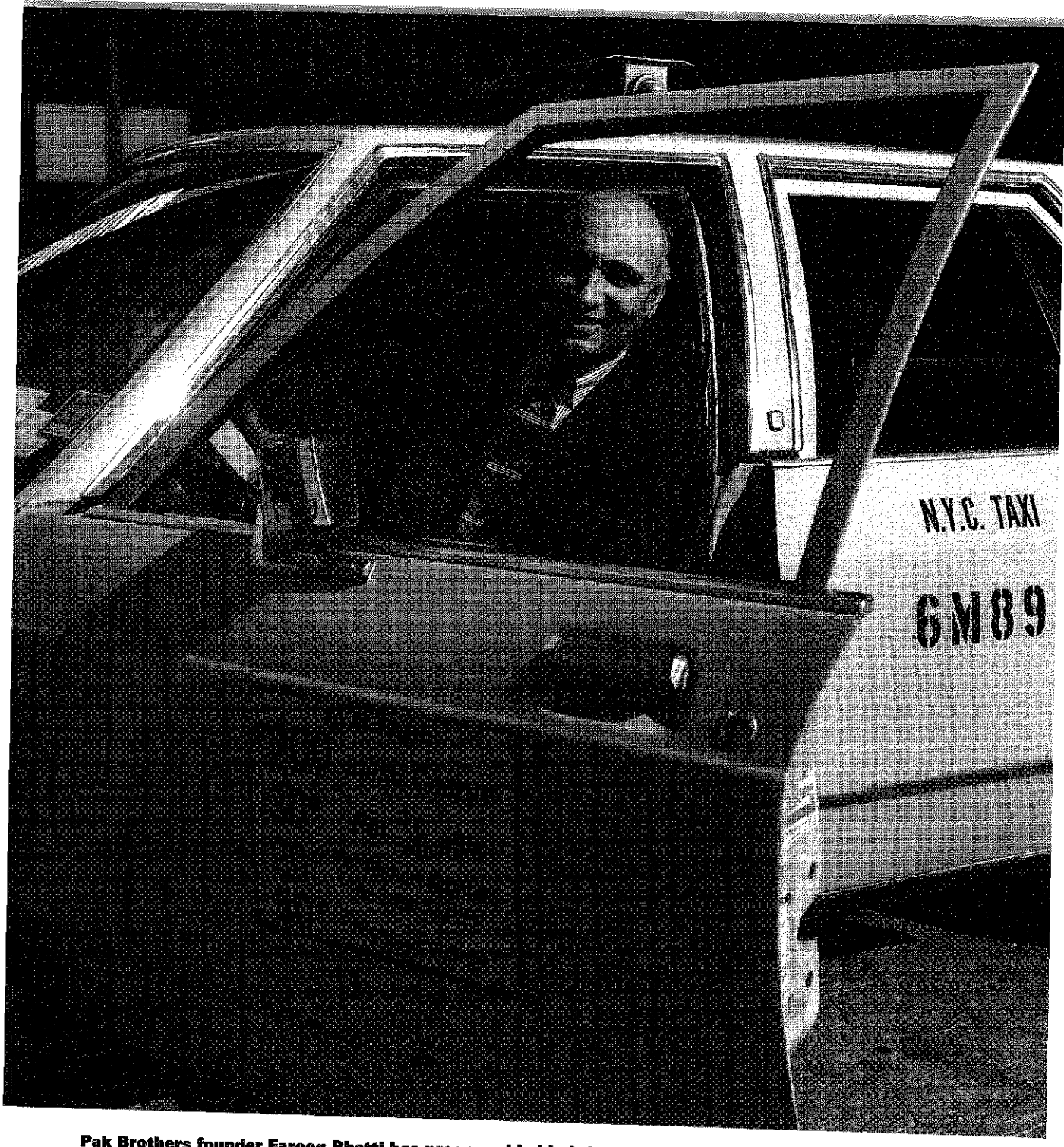

Pak Brothers founder Farooq Bhatti has prospered behind the wheel of his taxi.

friends in a four-bedroom apartment in Astoria, where he pays $300 a month for his spartan quarters. He and a partner recently borrowed money to buy a medallion—no mean expense at the going rate of $200,000. It will take them 10 to 15 years to pay off the debt, but once they do, their incomes will shoot up. If Rahim can make enough money in the next couple of years, he would like to return to school part-time and find a wife to bring over from Bangladesh.

Most South Asian taxi drivers dream of being in business for themselves someday, whether with a medallion of their own or some other enterprise. Karnal Singh drove a cab for five years and then opened the Punjabi Palace restaurant on Houston

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Street, where he employs a brother, a nephew, and two cousins, as well as a Bangladeshi chef. Still only 25, he recently opened a second restaurant at Tenth Avenue and 27th Street. Though a Sikh, he retains only one visible sign of his faith: the steel bangle, or *kara*, on his wrist. His Pakistani friend and frequent customer Riaz Ahmad, who wears the traditional *shalwar kameez* pajama suit and a backward Yankees baseball cap, has a master's degree in Islamic studies; he has been driving a taxi for five years. A restaurant is not in his future; he imagines instead going into "something like a car service—because I know this business." Many drivers pool their resources to make the down payment and pay off the loans needed to start a business. "Four drivers making $30,000 a year will get together and buy a $100,000 workshop," explains Farooq Bhatti, "and then they are on their way. In Pakistan we have become very good at repairing cars, because parts are so expensive." In the westernmost avenues of Chelsea and the Garment District, Pakistanis and Indians now run dozens of small auto-shops-cum-taxi-garages.

Khan came to New York in 1988, largely to get his two boys away from the guns and drugs endemic to his corner of Pakistan.

South Asians have also turned New York's newsstand business into a virtual ethnic monopoly. According to the Department of Consumer Affairs, they now operate an astonishing 300 of the city's 330 street newsstands.

Eight years ago I found myself in Penn Station after midnight, waiting for a delayed Amtrak train. The main hall was a dirty, unwelcoming place, full of the homeless and prowled by other unsavory types. I noticed a new shop on the concourse, with a sign announcing: HUDSON NEWS. It was an oasis of cleanliness and light, with a handsome selection of magazines. Best of all, it contained several young Pakistani men in uniform, keeping a watchful eye on what was clearly a place of refuge for the respectable. Since then, Hudson News has gone on to revolutionize the terminal newsstand business, with a hundred stores in train stations and airports nationwide. Almost all of its employees are South Asian. The managers of the Penn Station, Grand Central, and Port Authority stores are "Joe" Khan, "Bob" Khan, and "Mo" Khan, respectively. Unrelated to one another, all are Pakistani immigrants and vice presidents of the company.

Joe DiDomizio, son of the chain's founder and vice president of marketing and operations, is quick to give credit for the company's expansion to its employees from the subcontinent. "They have a tremendous work ethic, they work very long hours, they are very dedicated, and they treat the business as if it were theirs," he says. "We hire them at every level."

The assistant manager of the Grand Central store is Waris Khan. A Pathan from Pakistan, where his people are famous for their martial qualities, he is a former high school math teacher. Today the mustachioed Khan stands a short distance from the store in his smart tie and navy blazer, keeping a fierce watch over the whole operation. He commutes each morning from Westchester Square in the Bronx, arriving in time to open the store at 5 AM, and he doesn't usually leave until early evening. "We are from the North-West Frontier, and we are very strong," says Khan. "We don't mind doing anything. I am 63 and still working." Would-be robbers have tried to hold him up several times, but he so intimidated them that they left empty-handed. "You have to show that you are ready to fight," he insists, mindful perhaps of the famous Pathan motto, "If someone gives you a pinch, respond with a blow."

Sponsored by his four brothers—two of them lab technicians, one an accountant, and the fourth a supervisor at an Atlantic City casino—Khan came to New York in 1988, largely to get his two boys away from the guns and drugs endemic to his corner of Pakistan. The breaking point for him came when his 11-year-old returned from

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school one day talking about the Kalashnikov rifle that he and his friends had been playing with. Both of Khan's sons now attend City College, and one of them recently applied to medical school.

South Asians man the ranks of many other businesses in New York. Many work behind the counter at neighborhood delis and grocery stores, and at chain stores like Duane Reade and National Wholesale Liquidators. The more entrepreneurial of them have bought into Blimpies, International House of Pancakes, and other restaurant franchises; Baskin-Robbins reports that some 250 of its operators nationwide are now South Asian. In the low-income neighborhoods of the outer boroughs, Pakistanis have made a specialty of under-a-dollar retailing, with successful stores like 99¢ Dream, 99¢ World, and 99¢ City. And should you venture into such porn emporia as remain in Times Square, you will find that a Sri Lankan runs almost every one of them.

Young South Asian men of the second wave have made a niche for themselves in several of the city's more dangerous occupations. After taxi driving, the most common lines of work for Pakistani immigrants are construction and trucking. Sikhs have established an empire in the gas station business: the city's Department of Consumer Affairs estimates that immigrants from India's Punjab region—the great majority of them Sikhs—now own nearly half of New York's gas stations.

Sikhs seem well qualified for such work, where the possibility of robbery is a constant. Observant male Sikhs take the surname Singh upon admission to a quasi-military order called the Khalsa, and they are famously macho: "We are kind of like the Klingons in *Star Trek*," one young man told me. A fifteenth-century offshoot of Hinduism, the Sikh religion demands that observant males wear unshorn hair under a turban and, most important, carry a dagger. The Sikhs developed their proud military tradition through years of armed struggle—against India's Moghul rulers, against the British, and then against the Empire's enemies in India and abroad. Since independence, Sikh separatism at home has accelerated their emigration: many left amid the anti-Sikh sentiment that followed their bloody attempt to establish an independent state in 1984 and the assassination of Indira Gandhi shortly thereafter by one of her Sikh bodyguards. But even Sikhs have their limits. One told me that he started working at a gas station after two armed robberies in his cab, only to be robbed twice more "by black guys with guns." He wants to move back to India.

South Asian community leaders are quick to liken themselves to the Jewish immigrants of yesteryear, and there are indeed some pronounced parallels. Like Jews, members of the Indian "diaspora"—especially Gujaratis and Sindhis—have played the role of middleman in international commerce, trading and settling throughout the world. Their economic success has often stirred resentment, giving rise to harassment and confiscations in the Caribbean, in Burma and Malaysia, and most notoriously, in Uganda and Kenya, which expelled South Asians by the tens of thousands in the 1970s. Having been driven now from several homes, many South Asian immigrants to the U.S. are multiple exiles. Here they rarely encounter serious discrimination or racial hostility (though this hasn't prevented some South Asian campus activists from declaring that their communities share the victimhood of other "people of color").

Like their Jewish predecessors, people from all three countries of the subcontinent have a special reverence for teachers, whom they often address as "masterji" (the suffix "ji" indicating great respect). Keshavan Narayan, a Tamil Brahmin who works as a journalist in New York, touches the feet of his former schoolteachers when he encounters them back home. Farwana, a 14-year-old Bangladeshi girl whose family moved to Long Island City a year ago and who attends the Newcomers' School there, misses the respectful ways of her old classroom: students would stand up when the teacher entered and quiet down immediately when the teacher spoke. But she doesn't miss the beatings that Bengali teachers sometimes give their students.

Such attitudes translate into sterling academic performance. As anyone who has spent time late-

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ly on the NYU or Columbia campus knows, South Asians make it into the top schools in disproportionately large numbers. Like youngsters from China, Korea, and Vietnam, they are more likely than other Americans to excel in the hard sciences and mathematics (though as native English speakers, they are more comfortable with liberal arts subjects than many other Asian children). Solid early schooling accounts for some of their success in these fields—primary and secondary education on the subcontinent is often superb—but so does parental pressure. Like generations of Jewish parents, South Asians strongly prefer their children to take courses that promise secure professional careers. Engineering, medicine, and business administration are clear favorites. The idea that a college student should study, say, theater arts because he or she finds it personally fulfilling is an utterly alien, American idea that causes considerable generational strife.

"Overall, our parents did very well. We don't have too many drug addicts, teen pregnancies, or alcoholics."

South Asians pursue many traditional Jewish trades. The Jains—members of an Indian religious sect famous for its ascetic vegetarianism, nonviolence, and business acumen—have become a powerful force in the diamond industry, as cutters, polishers, and importers. Their connections extend from Antwerp and Tel Aviv to the cutting workshops of India and Manhattan's 47th Street, where they do business with Hasidic Jews. "Our philosophies are pretty close," says Arun Kothari, a Jain in the gem business, of his Jewish associates. "We have been working with them for 25 years. We trust them implicitly, and they trust us implicitly. We know their families, and they know our families." Punjabis in New York, like Jews before them, sell textiles and apparel in dozens of shops west of the Port Authority.

Natives of Gujarat, in northwestern India, have distinguished themselves as the premier shopkeepers and small-scale entrepreneurs of the South Asian diaspora. Wherever one finds immigrants from the subcontinent, a Patel—the most common Gujarati surname—is likely to run the neighborhood store. On the corner of 7th Street and First Avenue, one Mr. Patel has recently expanded the hardware store that he bought from a Russian Jewish family eight years ago. Both his sons and one of his daughters-in-law work in the store and have helped him open a second one in Gramercy Park. They presently employ workers from Mexico, Ecuador, Bangladesh, and Ukraine, and one can only listen with wonder as Mr. Patel's son Muk yells down to the storeroom in a mixture of English, Gujarati, and Spanish. Though he sports a long gray beard, Mr. Patel still puts in a 12-hour day between his two stores.

Most South Asian immigrants come to this country with at least a vague idea of returning home once they have made their fortunes. Yet few go back, especially if their children have gone to American schools. They do visit, however—and that can be a traumatic experience. In Bombay I met an Indian-American businessman who had just come "home" from a successful career as a management consultant in Manhattan. After only three days he had decided to go back to New York: he could no longer handle what now struck him as unacceptable chaos, filth, and deprivation. Sunita Mukhi, a scholar at New York's Asia Society, tells the story of an Indian businessman who went back for the funeral of his father. The sympathy of his relatives, many of whom he had never met, overwhelmed him. Mukhi asked him why he didn't move back. "Are you crazy?" he replied. "I cannot breathe there. Too many people, too much corruption. Even the priests were asking for money to facilitate my father's passage to the next life."

Other Indian-Americans forget what made them migrate and romanticize the old country. Like tourists, they see only the colorful trappings and cultural confidence of the life they left behind. The result, very often, is a kind of pan-Indian

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identity that even the Indian state, for all its efforts since independence, has failed to generate. For the children of such immigrants in particular, what matters ethnically is that they are from the subcontinent—not that they are Keralites or Kashmiris. In an effort to recover their roots, many will take classes in Hindi—India's official language—even though their parents speak, say, Tamil or Bengali. This softening of ethnic differences has carried over to the region's most combustible conflicts. "We get on fine with each other all over the world," a Pakistani taxi driver told me of his community's relations with Indians. "It's only on the border back home that we have a problem." South Asians from all three countries often refer to themselves as the *desi* community or just as *desis*. The term means "countryman," like the Yiddish *landsman*.

Like previous immigrant groups who have made a quick success of assimilation, South Asians struggle to hold on to their heritage. Pride drives much of this effort, but so too does a certain unease with their new home and its alluring but often destructive mass culture. As Theodore Dalrymple has written in these pages, "immigration across half the world is very stressful and disorienting, and old customs therefore become to some immigrants what soft toys are to children in the dark—a source of great comfort."

South Asians rely heavily on religion to transmit traditional values to their children. Families worship together at their local temples and mosques (hundreds of which are scattered throughout the New York area), and parents often send their children for cultural instruction—weekend religious school for young Muslims and classical Indian dance for Hindu girls.

For Hindus, such training has met with mixed success. Anand Mohand—a professor of philosophy at Queens College who is a Purohit, or hereditary Brahmin priest—argues that a meaningful Hindu education requires a Hindu social setting: "In India we are raised by tradition. You don't ask questions, and if you do, you are told 'because it is so.' Indians are Hindus more by osmosis than anything else. This means that immigrant parents are not equipped to answer the questions raised by their children. They spend millions of dollars building temples, but the youngsters are unwilling to sit through the ceremonies." Journalist Keshavan Narayan, who has observed the community for two decades, believes that many of these young Indian-Americans eventually give tradition a second chance. "After college, when they are looking for relationships and establishing careers, they undergo a change in thinking," he says. "They look at their roots and realize that their background gives them enormous strength in a society where family structure is falling apart."

Growing up in New Jersey, Anu Anand, 25, went to some kind of Indian cultural event every weekend while attending Catholic school during the week. Her parents, worried by stories of South Asian students unable to deal with the newfound freedom of school away from home, insisted that she pick a local college. A recent graduate of Farleigh Dickinson University now bound for law school, Anu is fascinated by her roots. "I would like to have a traditional wedding ceremony if I marry another Hindu," she says. And though she is not devout like her Brahmin parents, who pray every day, she studies Indian classical dance with her mother, Lakshmi, and insists, "I'm not an atheist, and I pray on my birthday." Whatever the differences between herself and her parents, Anu generally approves of the traditional upbringing that Indian parents provide: "Overall, our parents did very well. We don't have too many drug addicts, teen pregnancies, or alcoholics."

Najma Sultana, a psychiatrist and a prominent member of the Indian Muslim community in the U.S., applies a practical test to her faith. Yes, South Asian families "lead a boring life," she tells me as we sit in her living room in Jamaica, Queens, decorated with framed verses from the Koran, family pictures, and posters from the recent International Women's Congress in Beijing, which she attended. But such a life "comes in handy: we hold on to our money, and we hold on to our families." Islam helps them navigate American culture. "For us, religion is a positive force for dealing with all the

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temptations. We go to the mosque, we pray, we share—and half the battle is won."

Nothing is so fraught with the tensions between the old life and the new as relations between the sexes. When an Indian couple come to New York and take an apartment, it is often the first time they have enjoyed any privacy; on the subcontinent, even the wealthy live with their extended families, a constant source of company and help. Life in the city thus brings on feelings of intense loneliness, straining many marriages. For men who come here alone and work until they can bring over their families, the solitude can be unbearable, as one after another told me. This is the flip side of the family-values coin—not having your family with you is extremely painful.

Yet for South Asian women, these new arrangements can also be profoundly liberating. "In India, whether you are married or not, there are too many people guarding you," explains the novelist Susham Bedi. "And there are constant social and familial obligations, constant pressure from your parents, from your peers." Most immigrant wives go out and work, a practice still relatively rare on the subcontinent—and a sore point with husbands whose ideas of family life took shape in very different circumstances. "We feel strong here," continues Bedi. "Men, on the other hand, feel un-nourished. In India, even if his wife weren't around, his mother and a sister would take care of him." To appreciate just how revolutionary this change in family structure is, consider that in a Hindu marriage the wife promises to worship her husband "as a god." "It's tough for an Indian man," says Sunita Mukhi. "He comes to this country, and it doesn't fly anymore that he is a god, and the law doesn't say that he is a god."

"It's tough for an Indian man. He comes to this country, and it doesn't fly anymore that he is a god, and the law doesn't say that he is a god."

The humiliations inherent in immigrant existence also bedevil South Asian men in their family lives. Not knowing how to do things—paying taxes, registering the kids for school—makes them feel unmanned in the eyes of their wives and children. Nor is it easy for someone with a college degree to find himself driving a cab year after year. Many weave lying stories of corporate advancement to pass along to family back home. Social worker Ram Iyer says that it is hardest for immigrant men in their forties or older, many of whom "have to come to terms with the fact that they are always going to be working at a newsstand or in a garage." They transfer their ambitions to their children.

Unfortunately, such frustrations often contribute to domestic violence—a serious but largely unacknowledged problem in the South Asian community. According to Prema Vora, the program director of Sakhi, a Manhattan-based South Asian women's group dedicated to combating such abuse, it is not uncommon to encounter battered South Asian wives whose husbands have deliberately refused to sponsor them, thus depriving them of legal-immigrant status. The women "are terrified to go to the police because they're afraid they'll be deported." Domestic servants—many of them illiterate and brought over illegally—are vulnerable in the same way and often suffer under atrocious conditions.

Almost all South Asian parents would like their children to marry within the community. When pressed, they will admit that they would prefer them to marry within the same caste and ethnic group. This is true even of people like Susham Bedi, who comes from a generation of Indian intellectuals that pointedly rejected other forms of caste and religious prejudice. Among her friends, she says, "the hardest thing to accept is a black or a Muslim. A Christian or a Jew is okay." According to Professor Mohand, marriages between young *desis* and Jews are especially common.

Most South Asian immigrants, even many of the second generation, continue to believe that you love the person you marry—you don't marry the

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person you love. A modified version of arranged marriages thus remains the norm in their communities. Parents do not simply impose husbands on their daughters, of course. Rather, they introduce her to a man after they've checked his background and met his parents. The young people then decide whether to pursue the relationship.

The South Asian press in New York—Indians alone sustain seven English-language papers and a dozen more in Malayalam, Bengali, Gujarati, and Urdu—bristles with matrimonial ads. "Sikh parents request correspondence from handsome Sikh professionals (no Jats), for their daughter, 27, 5'9", educated and family-oriented." "Brother invites alliance from respected Sindhi families for sister, 28, 5'2", attractive, highly educated, working in US. Prefer early marriage." "Parents seek tall MD/MS/MBA match for beautiful, tall, slim, fair, Agarwal citizen girl, born/raised in India, 25/5'5", BS, MBA (US) Senior Executive." Sometimes parents describe their daughter as "homely"—meaning not that she is plain but that she would be content as a traditional homemaker. And having a "fair" or "wheaten" complexion is a definite advantage for a woman, especially among those northern Indians who consider their light skin and greater height a sign of racial superiority over southern Indians.

South Asians are quick to defend these old-fashioned alliances. "You have a 50 percent divorce rate in this country," gloats a cabbie named Ali. "Our system is working much better." It must be said, however, that the sexes divide in their support for traditional marriages. The South Asian press often notes the continuing preference of young Indo-American men for wives from the old country, women who have not been "spoiled" by Western ways. Prizing their newfound liberty, Indo-American women have begun to marry out of the community at a much higher rate.

Sexual liberation is a foreign and deeply disturbing notion for South Asian parents. Most do not allow their children to date, and many will not even allow their daughters to have male friends. Coming to terms with American sexual license is especially hard for those who are observant Muslims. As Farooq Bhatti puts it, sitting in his tiny, windowless office behind the Port Authority, "We don't want to raise our daughters in all the vulgarity and nudity, the boyfriend/girlfriend concepts. It is hard to remain pure in this culture." He remembers a friend who was so disturbed by the kissing that his seven-year-old boy and three-year-old girl had seen on television that he packed up and returned to Pakistan.

Most South Asian immigrants adjust more easily to life in the U.S., fending off the more pernicious elements in our culture while embracing the opportunities that attracted them in the first place. They have become model Americans in many ways. Well-educated and industrious, they contribute prodigiously to the wider economy and society while at the same time maintaining the vitality of their own communities.

Each year in mid-August, the Indian and Pakistani communities celebrate the independence of their home countries with parades down Madison Avenue to Union Square. Crowds picnic in the park. There are stalls all around, selling samosas and kebabs. Small children with American accents cling to their parents' knees and wave little flags. Teenage boys in baggy jeans affect boredom, hoping to impress the girls. Many of the women wear brightly colored traditional dress, while older men look crisply Anglo-Indian in Nehru jackets or coat and tie. Modest by New York standards, the event has an authentic feeling that has long been missing from most of the city's other ethnic parades.

No doubt the day will come when New York's South Asians, like sundry Polish-, Greek-, and Irish-Americans, will parade down Fifth Avenue as thousands of their fellow citizens cheer them on. With the mayor on hand to praise their contributions to the community, the marchers will feel a certain self-consciousness as they display their distinctive costumes and food, dances and songs. They will have crossed the invisible cultural line that divides the immigrant from the hyphenated American. Such assimilation has always taken place with astonishing speed. It has its tragic side, to be sure, as traditions fall away. But it has an intensely American glory—well worth parading every year. •

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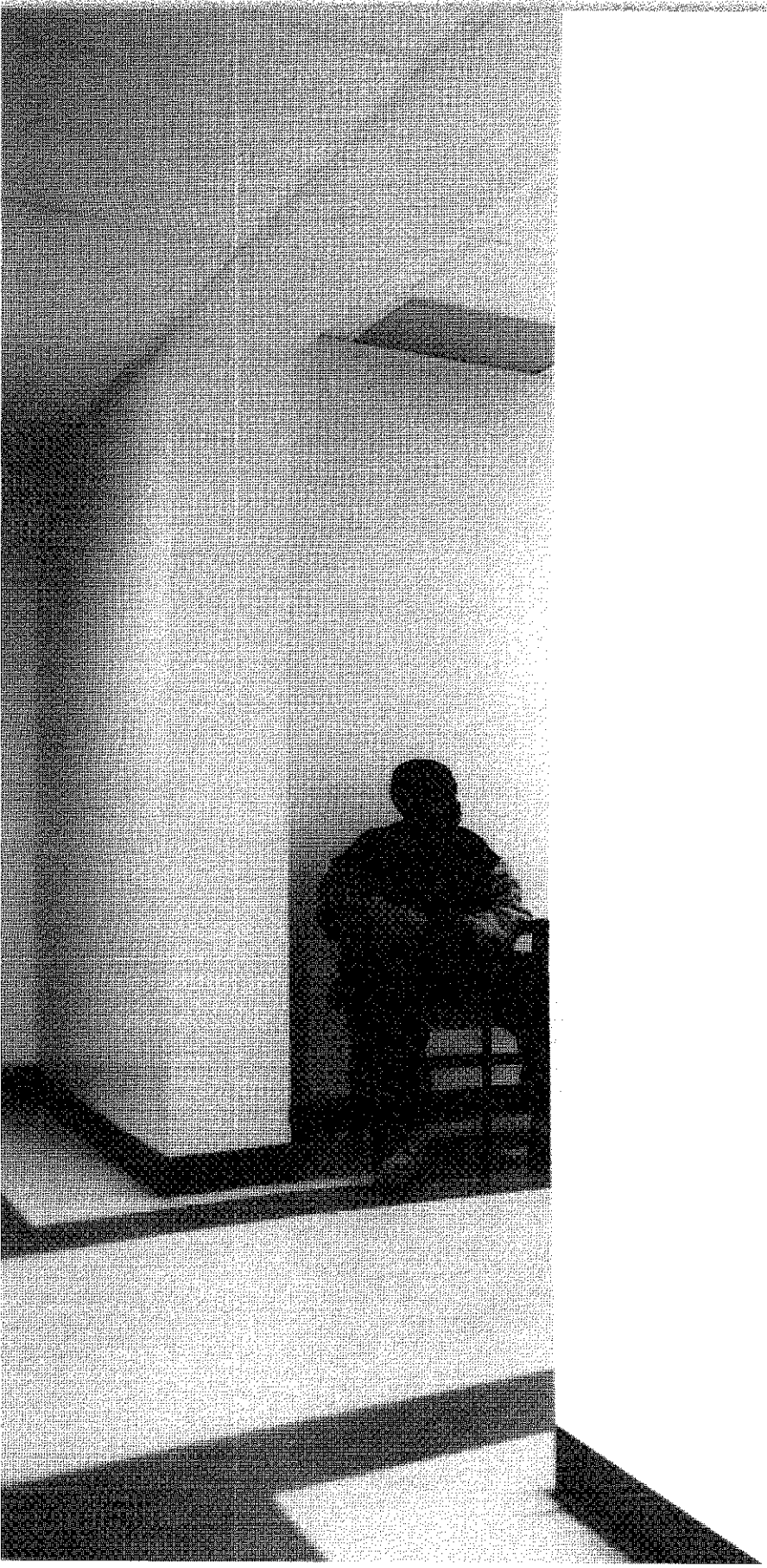

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How Philadelphia Salvages Teen Criminals

John J. Dilulio Jr. and Beth Z. Palubinsky

Juvenile justice experts have thought hard about how to treat the toughest kids, the young thugs on their way to becoming superpredators. But what about the not-so-tough malefactors—the 14-year-old shoplifters or the 15-year-olds caught with drugs? These are kids whose fate very often hangs in the balance: they *might* grow up to be hardened criminals, but many can still be saved. Most cities stand by and leave such kids to chance, with the inevitable destructive results. But not Philadelphia: the City of Brotherly Love has devised an imaginative institution called the Youth Aid Panel, or YAP, aimed at returning them to the straight and narrow. And early indications are that YAP really works.

YAP began as a pilot program of the Philadelphia district attorney's office a decade ago, the brainchild of a dynamic duo, Mike Cleary and John Delaney, both self-described "Philly boys" passionate about their city's future. Before joining the DA's office, Cleary had a decade-plus tour of duty as a juvenile probation officer in the city's high-crime badlands. "I knew," he recalls, "that I was spending all my time with the most serious youth offenders and was not able to hold the other kids accountable, get them into treatment, help them one-on-one, connect with their schools, or what have you. And I knew that this failure to monitor was a factor in their future crime and delinquency."

Veteran judge Daniel R. Coburn of the New Jersey Superior Court, another juvenile justice innovator, explains why this is so. The great mass of juvenile offenders who commit misdemeanors or even first-time felonies—those Coburn calls "minnows" by contrast with the chronic and violent teen "sharks"—usually get sentenced to probation. But that turns out to be utterly meaningless in most cases: such kids get little or no real supervision on probation and conclude, reasonably enough, that crime has no consequences. "The surest way to turn a minnow into a shark," Coburn observes, "is to catch him, book him,

A community that makes sure crime has consequences helps stop minor malefactors from becoming major ones.

A 12-year-old awaits the YAP's decision.

Photographs by David Swanson

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and then do nothing to monitor his behavior or hold him accountable. Today's minnows—the ones who stay on the streets, beat the system, and think juvenile probation is a big joke—are tomorrow's street sharks, including your predatory, no-fear-of-jail great white sharks."

Cleary and Delaney, the deputy DA in charge of juvenile proceedings, believed that "there had to be a better way to straighten out and save these first-time offenders," as Delaney puts it. Cost made it impossible to hire the legions of probation officers needed to do the job. Instead, the two prosecutors realized, they might be able to harness what Delaney calls "our town's greatest resource—the people in the neighborhoods." From that insight sprang YAP—a corps of citizen volunteers from Philadelphia's inner-city neighborhoods dedicated to straightening the crooked lives of the city's more salvageable young criminals before it is too late. Today the program operates throughout Philadelphia's 24 police districts, with 10 to 15 adult volunteers in each district.

Beulah Parker, a small, bespectacled, 61-year-old black woman with a ready smile, perfectly personifies the program. She doesn't look very tough; in fact, she looks exactly like the vulnerable, purse-clutching, slightly hunched-over old lady whom urban teen criminals love to mug. But looks can be deceiving. For a quarter century, Parker worked as a special-education and shop teacher in a dilapidated local high school. A churchgoing Baptist, she raised 14 children in a modest row house, mostly on her own as a street-wise single mother. "I tell the kids, 'I haven't always been this old; I know what's happening,'" she says. "You must be honest with the child and the parent that the child did bad, did wrong, but that we in the community expect better from him, want better for him, and don't take excuses." She puts juvenile troublemakers and their parents on notice: "I will be calling you sometime," she warns. "I know the neighborhood. I might stop at your home. I might come to school. So you never know where I might be. You can run, but you can't hide."

It is no idle boast. On the second and fourth Monday evenings of each month, Parker walks over to a local public hospital and finds her way to the conference room. There she gathers for several hours with a group of nine of her adult neighbors, all but one of them black, four of them men. The group includes a forklift operator, a small variety-store merchant, a public school kitchen worker, and a graduate student. A Philadelphia police offi-

Facing the Youth Aid Panel.

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cer joins them, to act as a liaison between the program and the police department. On a typical night Parker and nearly 250 YAP panelists across the city will hear two or three cases of first-time juvenile offenders arrested for crimes ranging from misdemeanors to low-level felonies—fighting in school, defacement or destruction of property, possession of drugs, retail theft, possession of weapons, simple or aggravated assault.

Most of the members of Parker's group found the program through the newspaper notices and radio announcements that the DA's office runs once a year to recruit volunteers. The office then carefully screens applicants. There are no hard-and-fast requirements to get into a YAP, beyond residence in the police district, a willingness to commit the required time, and the DA's sense from both the written application and a 30-

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minute interview that an applicant has the necessary maturity and judgment. But the DA won't accept public officials, ward leaders, or local party committee members, no matter how well-meaning, to ensure that the program remains immaculately non-political.

Once screened, prospective panelists undergo six hours of intensive training from the assistant DAs who run the program and from the staff of a local church-based mediation and crisis resolution program. The training, which also serves as a final screening mechanism, centers on preparing panelists to ask the juveniles who will come before them probing questions about their offenses, school performance, friends, and home life. The training session also shows the panelists how to craft the contract that ultimately results from every offender's appearance before the YAP.

In a typical introductory YAP training session conducted last year, over 50 adult volunteers from the neighborhood, most of them black, arrived right on time at a Philadelphia police station and crammed into a dank, sweaty back room. Asked for his views about what he termed "these new Yappers," one veteran patrolman in attendance responded: "Most citizens want to sit home, watch TV, and bitch about young punks destroying the neighborhood. But these people come in, invest their time and energy, and help the situation by holding kids who get arrested accountable. I've seen all kinds of citizen volunteer programs come and go. YAP is different. That's why most cops respect it."

The first hour of the training was a crash course in the workings of the juvenile justice system, the legal complications surrounding the adjudication of youngsters, crime statistics, the history of the YAP program, and the nitty-gritty of how YAPs work. "Don't worry too much about the details," the instructors from the DA's office repeatedly reassured the trainees; "just get the basics and trust your common sense." But college freshmen determined to get a perfect grade never looked so intent on catching every word and jotting down every point.

A parent or responsible adult, like this grandmother,

In the second and third hours of the training, people who'd chaired YAPs came in to help field the trainees' endless stream of questions. What the new Yappers wanted most was general guidance on dos and don'ts. "Can I push the child or the parent to get involved in my church, because that's what they really need?" asked one trainee—to a small chorus of amens. "No way," replied a DA-trainer, whose knowing smile said he had heard that question before. He went on to

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must accompany a juvenile criminal to the hearing.

explain how allowing any such activity in the YAP program would raise thorny church-state issues. The questioner and the crowd nodded in satisfaction.

Several YAP trainees wanted to know how to deal with uncooperative parents. "Let's face it," said one elderly trainee, "these children get into trouble when the parents aren't doing what they should be doing." A YAP chairman who was on hand responded with an example. "The other month," he recounted, "we had a boy who was charged with an aggravated assault, had flunked his courses, and didn't do anything outside the school but hang out—no sports, nothing. We gave him a contract that included doing community service work. He missed twice. I caught up with him at school, and he told me his mother wouldn't give him the subway token he needed to get to the service site. I called her up, and she

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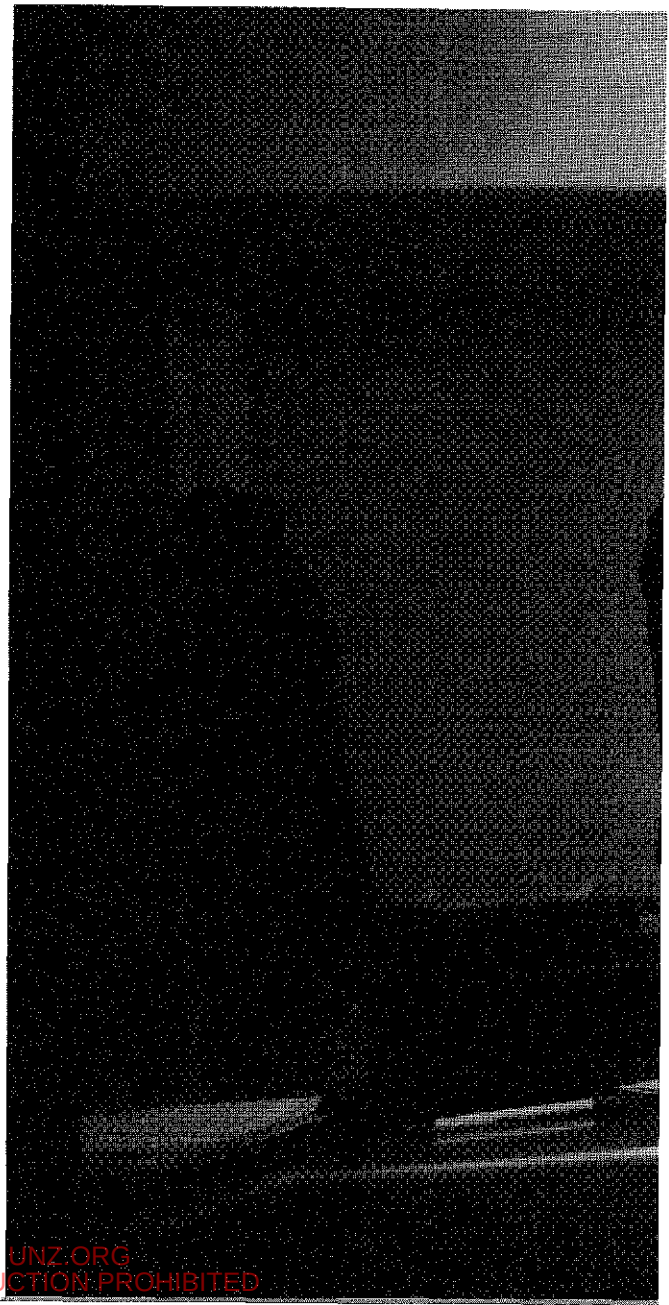
gives me the line. You know, 'I can't afford it.' So I came back at her. Said, 'Look here, your son has on expensive sneakers—and you're telling me you can't afford a subway token so that this boy can do what he's supposed to do, meet the contract terms, get the help he needs, and avoid getting fingerprinted, going to court, and maybe going to jail? It's your call, but if he doesn't show up next week he's off the program and back to court for sure.'" The boy showed up and completed his contract.

"Back to court for sure" is no exaggeration. As the training drills into volunteers, YAP functions strictly as a voluntary pretrial diversion program. A juvenile can avoid criminal prosecution and the risk of a criminal record by appearing before a panel of his neighbors to answer for crimes and by complying fully with the punishments meted out by the panel. A common saying among YAP aficionados is: "Take YAP or take your chances." About nine out of ten of the 800 or so juveniles offered the YAP option (a total of about 10 percent of Philadelphia's yearly juvenile court referrals) have taken it.

The DA's office, in consultation with the police department and local probation and school officials, decides if a given youth is eligible for YAP. These officials must have a strong sense that the youth will cooperate with the process and see it through. The offender also must be enrolled in school and must be able to appear before the panel with a parent, guardian, or some other adult who has a strong, regular presence in his life. Finally, he must admit his guilt in a signed statement.

Each juvenile offender who participates in YAP normally appears before the panel located in his police district. His parent, guardian, or other responsible adult must attend with him. The YAP encourages victims to attend the hearing and take part, but it prohibits lawyers from participating (though they may be present), since the YAP is meant to seek a community-based, community-devised, community-enforced resolution to the offense. "I love it," says one YAP police officer liaison, "when the lawyers waltz in thinking they're going to run the show. They fill the kids' heads with tons of self-exculpatory crap and teach them to beat the system. It's a pleasure telling them to 'Shut up or get out! This is pretrial diversion, pal. Go peddle it elsewhere.'"

The panelists interview the youth and ask him to explain in his own words what happened. They may also interview the victim and the par-



Signing the contract with the YAP monitor.

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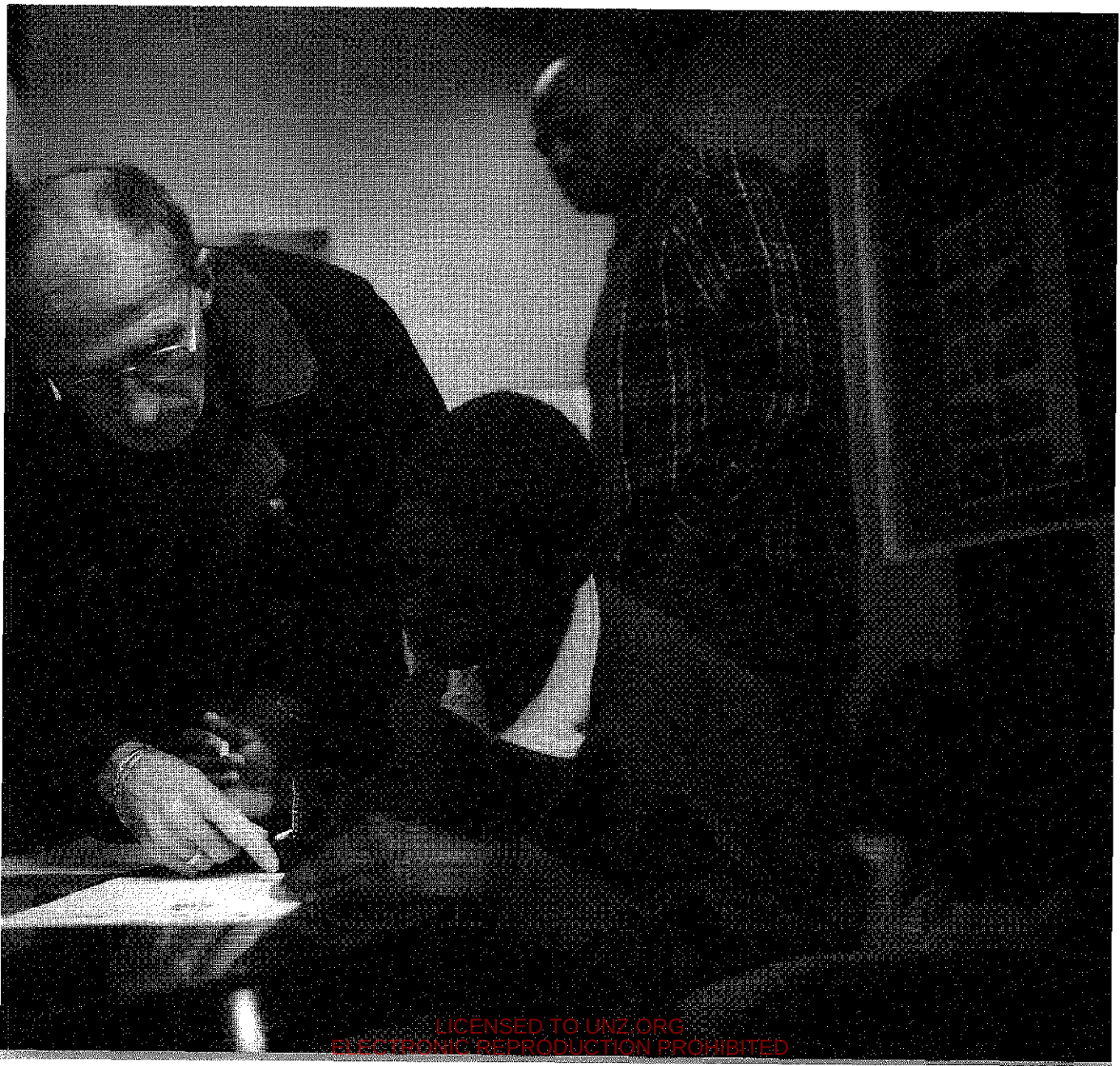
ents. Then they meet privately to talk about the case and decide what punishment to impose. Contract conditions typically include a combination of public service, restitution, curfew, essay writing, non-contact with the victim or bad company, counseling, and letters of apology.

If anything, the panelists' live performance outclasses their excellent training. One night last year, for example, a YAP heard the case of a teenager who brought a knife to school and carried it to a gang fight. In walked a surly 16-year-old, unprepared for the rapid-fire hour-long inquisition that quickly ensued.

"You're smiling," one panelist began. "It doesn't seem like getting arrested was a big deal to you." Before answering, the boy's eyes searched the



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The 12-year-old heads for a class that his YAP contract requires.

room for sympathy, but found only ten streetwise sets of cold stares. The smile gone, he mumbled an answer into his shirtsleeve. "I can't hear or understand you," boomed another panelist, adding, "At this time you could be facing a murder charge. Do you realize that? If you had stabbed the other kids with angry strength, they could be dead or dying and you'd be locked up, maybe forever." The youth nodded in the affirmative, but then made the biggest mistake you can make if you are sitting before a YAP: he started to blame others for what he had done. "Excuse me," a panelist abruptly cut him off, "but I went to that school. I know that hallway, I live in this neighborhood, and I walk those streets every damn day. I don't have no knife. Most kids I

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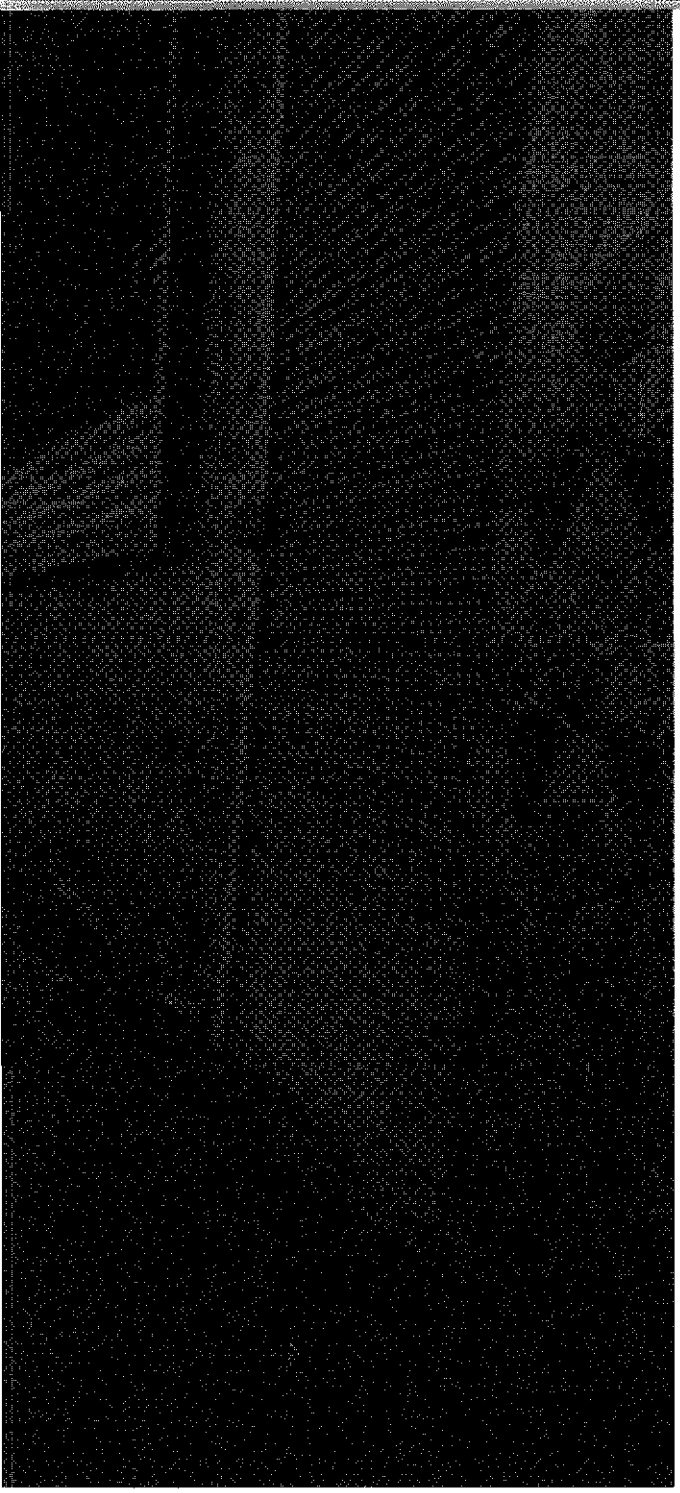

know your age, including kids smaller than you, don't carry no knife. And you ain't the only kid that's got troubles. But you *are* the kid who brought a knife."

By this point, just ten minutes into the hearing, the young offender's surly bearing had followed his tough-guy smile and defiant, halfway-down-into-the-chair slouch into attitudinal oblivion. He was sitting up straight. He spoke clearly and audibly. He began dabbing at the tears welling up in his eyes. And almost exactly at the moment when the boy's reformed body language proclaimed this change in attitude, a panelist forced him to articulate it. "Do you understand that we ain't here to play games? We're here because you did something illegal, something wrong, something stupid, something dangerous to yourself and others?" "Yes, sir," he replied. A panelist at the opposite end of the table then asked, "How did you feel when you got arrested? Weren't you ashamed?" "A little," the boy said, "because I didn't know." "You didn't know what?" another panelist broke in. "You didn't know shame, or you didn't know you'd get caught, or you didn't know a knife could kill somebody? Do you want to be arrested again? Try to think of the consequences! Try!"

With half an hour still to go, tears were drying on the youth's cheeks, and the panel's emphasis subtly shifted from the take-responsibility inquisitorial to the tough-love therapeutic. "I'll tell you what makes me cry," a panelist said, leaning across the table and looking directly into the young man's eyes. "I feel like crying because you are in this mess, and without this panel you could be on your way to jail. I cry inside because you are going to hurt people and destroy your life if you don't stop the nonsense right here, right now. Why are you doing so poorly in school? Hanging out too much?"

By the end of the hearing, the panelists were working to get the boy to replay the misdeed in his head and see how it could and should never have happened. "Do you think you can make some other choice in this type of situation if it happens again?" came the concluding question. "Yes, I know I can. I have to," came the youngster's convincingly sincere-sounding reply.

The panel crafted a compliance contract for the juvenile. Although average contracts run three months, in this case the contract included six months of formal counseling, attendance at a church-based conflict-resolution workshop, com-

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munity service, and an essay, to be submitted to the district's YAP police officer liaison, on how to avoid trouble in the future. While panels tailor each contract to the individual offender, most contracts follow certain time-tested patterns. For example, contracts for kids caught with illegal drugs often include such terms as cleaning up local parks, honoring a curfew, getting a part-time job, writing an essay on the dangers of substance abuse, or participating in the Police Athletic League. For theft, YAP panels typically require the offender to make full or partial restitution, write a letter of apology to the victim, and do community service work. For simple assault or weapons possession, common contract terms include all of the above, as well as restrictions on contact with victims, no association with delinquent or criminal peers, and conflict-resolution classes. In arranging community service and other contract tasks, the panels routinely turn to the YMCA and other local volunteer-based organizations.

"He said, 'Don't matter. Nobody care.' I said, 'Boy, I'm here, ain't I? I'm here, I'm on your case, and I care.' After that, his whole attitude changed."

"When they hear that the YAPs involve counseling and such," notes DA Cleary, "some people say, 'Uh-oh, another touchy-feely program for juvenile criminals.'" But it's YAP's strictness that makes it effective. Though most probationers nationally, adult or juvenile, have to get counseling, do community service, pay restitution, and so on, only about half actually comply even in part, and almost none ever face jail for noncompliance. By contrast, YAP contracts, because they are actually binding, make unmistakably clear to offenders that the community expects them to make up for their misdeeds and to meet clear standards of behavior—and is watching to ensure that they do so. "The YAP program," chuckles one veteran panelist, "*is* touchy-feely, but only because the adults are positively *touchy* about kids doing crime, and a kid who fails to complete the contract is going to *feel* himself on the way back to court and possibly to jail." Explaining why the program works, DA Delaney stresses that YAP volunteers "aren't bashful about telling the kids that doing crime is wrong," and that "compliance with the terms is monitored and accountability is enforced."

One long arm of YAP is Leon Barnett, a barrel-chested black man who looks considerably younger than his 68 years. For over three decades Barnett was the dean of discipline at a Philadelphia junior high school. At a recent session of his YAP, he questioned a 15-year-old girl charged with aggravated assault against a teacher on school grounds. The incident began when the teacher reprimanded the girl for closing the classroom windows without permission.

As the hearing opened, the girl's attitude was brazen. Sitting there with her grandmother, who had told the panel that the girl was giving her terrible disciplinary problems at home, she rolled her eyes as the YAP chairman summarized the charges against her and asked for her explanation of what happened. "I was cold," the girl said, "and the teacher always hollers at me, and I'm tired when I get home, because sometimes I don't have a token for the bus and I have to walk, and I don't feel like doing what my grandmother wants."

Then Barnett began the questioning. "Whose classroom is it? . . . I said, whose classroom is it? . . . You cursed out the teacher. Why was that necessary? . . . It was not necessary. How about if I came to your house and started turning the lights on and off or opening and closing the windows? You've been late for school over and over. There's no reason for that. Why are you giving your grandmother a hard time and getting up in her face? . . . You're tired? Tired from what? Without grandmother you'd be in foster care or worse. And you don't listen to her? You've got to start saying 'Yes, grandmother,' smile, and do what she asks. Be grateful for what you have. I know ten girls who would switch places with you in a minute if they could."

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By the time Barnett had finished, the girl's eyes had stopped rolling and started tearing. Her contract included mandatory counseling, a curfew, and a letter of apology to the teacher. For her monitor she drew Celeste Harris, a 35-year-old black woman who works several jobs and is raising two teenage boys. During the hearing, Harris repeatedly warned the girl about her attitude. "You're a beautiful young black woman," Harris told her, "but now you look ugly. Your attitude makes you ugly. But you can change your attitude and be beautiful, get it together, and succeed."

Monitoring styles vary from YAP to YAP and from panelist to panelist. Harris will make weekly calls to the young woman who assaulted her teacher, "pop up at the house," and "see who she's hanging out with," she says. "But I won't hold her hand or baby her. If somebody doesn't put a tough love on her now, she will surely get into trouble again and again. Most of the kids we see aren't bad, but they're making bad choices, either because they have no parents or their parents are not being parents." Some monitors drop in at home; others meet the young person at school; still others, at the local fast-food outlet.

Out on a Saturday-morning monitoring visit to a gas station where a YAP juvenile was working part-time, a rookie panelist discovered what many veteran monitors report: that most youths absorb the panel's moral accountability message and welcome its follow-up monitoring. The boy brought the panelist in to meet his boss and begged him to stay so that he could show the monitor how fast he could repair a tire. "He was surprised, but he wasn't embarrassed to see me," the panelist-monitor reflects; "he was proud to show me he was complying, and just happy to have the contact."

Barnett has had much the same experience with several of the juveniles he has monitored. "It shows you what's there if you stay with these kids before it's too late," he says. "When I was coming up in this city," he recalls, "if you did something wrong, anybody in the neighborhood could reprimand you—and you dare not go home and say that Mr. or Mrs. Jones fussed at me because I was doing something wrong." Those days are long gone, he acknowledges, but YAP, he believes, is at least a remnant of such community cohesion and adult authority. It's hard not to agree with him that the YAPs, especially through the activities of the monitors, bolster old codes of decent community conduct.

In some cases they represent the only positive adult-child relationship the youngster has ever known. "One day," a YAP monitor recalls, "I closed my shop early and took a ride through the neighborhood. I caught up with one boy I was monitoring at his house, or thought I had. A big filthy, drunk-looking man comes to the door—not the same man who came with the child to the panel—and I tell him who I am and what I'm there for, and he just starts cussing the boy, cussing the boy's mother, and cussing the boy's real daddy, the man who had brought him to the panel. I said, 'Man, don't be that way. Trash like that is why the child's so wild.' I really let him have it.

"As it was, the boy wasn't even down at the house. I caught up with him later the same day, hanging across at the school. Every other kid was smoking reefer, but not him. I took him aside and told him what happened at his house. He said, 'Don't matter. Nobody care.' I said, 'Boy, I'm here, ain't I? I'm here, I'm on your case, and I care.' After that, his whole attitude changed. He completed his contract, and his grades went way up too. That was about three years ago. Now he's got a job; now he's no fool. I saw him around Christmas, and he said—for the first time—'Man, thank you. You stayed on me. That little-bitty program saved me.' Felt real good."

Another YAP veteran, a middle-aged woman, paid a midday monitoring visit to the home of a girl whose contract required her not to associate with the friends with whom she'd been using drugs and starting trouble, including minor gang fights, in school. As the monitor made her way up the steps of the small row house, she could see a bunch of teenage girls in the living room. Music blared, and above it, she could hear, as she approached the front door, a barrage of foul language. "I thought, 'Here's a failure for sure,'" she

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recounts. "I hesitated to knock on the door. I was a little scared. But, you know, I was angry too." She knocked. Nobody answered. "So I knocked hard with both fists." The music stopped, the cursing stopped, and the door flew open.

"She's at the store," said the preteenage sister of the YAP juvenile. "She was afraid you'd come, so she got out and left us. Okay?" "I went down to the store," the monitor recalls, "and she's there crying into a dishrag. I know it's more than we're supposed to do, but I spent the whole rest of the day on her. After three months in the program, she did everything she was supposed to do on the contract, or more. She liked knowing that I cared that she behaved herself and stayed away from trouble."

Once the youth completes the contract, his monitoring—and his connection to the YAP—ends. He is discharged from the program without ceremony or congratulation. Such youths, says Cleary, "are just doing what they're supposed to do." Cleary and Delaney discourage panelists from continuing relationships with their charges. "The panelists take on a lot as YAP members as it is. Hearing two, sometimes three, cases a night is hard work, and we don't want them to burn out."

"I thought, 'Here's a failure for sure.' I hesitated to knock on the door. I was a little scared. But, you know, I was angry too."

Prosecutors Cleary and Delaney call YAP volunteers like Barnett, Parker, and Harris the city's "unsung heroes and heroines." But is YAP really working to keep minnows from becoming sharks? The preliminary data we have gathered suggest that it surely is. Fully 90 percent of offenders who are offered the YAP option take it, and 90 percent of those complete their contracts. Most of those who complete their contracts do not get arrested again in Philadelphia. The overall recidivism rate among all offenders who have appeared before YAPs since 1987 is an estimated 20 percent—less than a third the national recidivism rate among young people aged 10 to 17 who are adjudicated in a traditional court setting.

The program achieves these excellent results at relatively low cost. As a result of the program, each of the DAs assigned permanently to prosecute juvenile cases saves one hour a day of court time. Overall, YAP saves the city an estimated $250,000 a year in court costs.

The YAPs also strengthen inner-city communities. They attract adult volunteers who live in the offender's neighborhood, who know who commits crimes in the area and where, and who can act as the community's eyes, ears—and conscience. So YAP is true "community policing." No wonder the program attracts intense loyalty from panelists: some have served since the program's inception, and about 40 have served for four or more years. No wonder, too, that the Philadelphia DA's office has consulted with more than 40 other localities about replicating the program.

Of course, only more rigorous evaluation will show the precise effectiveness of YAP or YAP-like monitoring programs, and we are about to undertake such a detailed study. Already, though, it is clear that this real-life Philadelphia story has had a happy ending for many of the program's juveniles. One YAP panelist has no doubt about what makes the program effective. "We have difficult cases come to the panel every other week," he says. "One boy we had last summer was carrying a weapon. He could barely write. Couldn't spell 'knife.' Spoke hardly a word, no matter what we said. But later, in an essay written as part of his contract, he puts down on paper what he wants from us: 'Do more to make me act like I know what's right. Like you care what I do. Care about me enough to make me do right.' Some of these children are lost. But some are just begging to be held to the golden rule. They want to be pushed to do right by grown-ups in the neighborhood who care." •

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Gotham's Workforce Woes

Heather Mac Donald

Employers say that New York's economic future depends on upgrading the quality of its workers.

When Michael W. decided to open a fried-chicken restaurant in Brooklyn, he didn't think twice about becoming a New York City employer. But he overlooked one small point: finding staff. In the first year he went through about 40 employees for four or five part-time slots. "You tell prospective employees to be here at 11 AM, they show up at 2:30. You tell them, 'Sorry, the position has been filled.' They say, 'You bastard, you bitch, you're always trying to keep us down.'" Setting up a business that depends on local youths is "a lost cause," he has concluded.

FPG

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Across the East River, large Wall Street employers sound a similar complaint. As a gesture of community goodwill, Chase Manhattan Bank holds an open hiring session three mornings a week for teller positions. Marjorie Ryan, who oversees the recruiting program, reports that a poor attitude toward work is just the beginning of these prospective employees' problems. Even the 6 to 10 percent of the candidates who make it through an interview and training often have a hard time once they get to a bank. "They can't keep track of transactions," Ryan says. "They can't assimilate all the information they need to tally at the end of the day."

Michael W. and Marjorie Ryan have come hard up against one of the more emotion-fraught economic subjects in the city: the dearth of good entry-level workers. New York's labor force once served as a magnet for employers and, at the top of the employment ladder, still does. But talk to the city's employers today and, with few exceptions, the same complaints surface again and again: entry-level employees are defensive and inflexible, chronically late and absent; they dress inappropriately and treat supervisors, co-workers, and customers with disdain; they can't speak or write properly and lack basic analytic skills. Still, for all their exasperation, many employers will share these complaints only sotto voce: they don't want to appear unduly critical, for fear of being charged with racism or bad corporate manners.

But New York cannot politely ignore the worsening problem of its workforce. The difficulty of finding employees with a strong work ethic and decent basic skills contributed to the flight of businesses from the city during the 1980s, an exodus halted only by the recession of the early 1990s, when the demand for workers dried up. Now that the city's economy is slowly reawakening, the need for qualified, reliable workers is once again growing acute. Regrettably, the Board of Education, a key factor in ensuring competent employees, has yet to confront the dire shortcomings of the workers-to-be whom it graduates. Instead, the public schools have rushed to embrace the dubious methods of "school-to-work" instruction, the latest trend in progressive pedagogy and a woefully inadequate bridge to the world of employment.

Data on the workforce problem are hard to come by, and CEOs, though exasperated with the city's workforce, almost universally refuse to go public with their complaints as they move jobs out of town. In the 1980s, George Tobjy, now a senior manager at the giant KPMG Peat Marwick accounting and consulting firm, represented the city in talks with corporations that were threatening to leave. Their number-one beef: poor clerical help. "But the companies said to us, 'If we're ever quoted, we will deny it,'" Tobjy recalls. Jim Shriner, director of location strategies for Fantus Consulting, a corporate-relocations subsidiary of the Deloitte & Touche accounting firm, explains that companies always want to attribute their relocation to things "you can't do anything about," like the price of real estate. Telling the truth won't change anything, they reason, and risks a public-relations fiasco. Instead, businesses just "very quietly transfer or create jobs elsewhere," concluded a 1992 mayoral task force.

But interviews with dozens of bosses across the city produce a remarkably consistent picture of disgruntlement. Bad attitude tops the list of employers' complaints against New York workers. New employees almost invariably arrive with an entitlement mentality. While this is by no means unique to New York, companies that have picked up and moved elsewhere say that workers here possess a particularly aggravated case of inflated expectations—not surprising in a city that has perfected the transfer of responsibility from the individual to the "system."

Chase's Ryan is continually amazed at how potential employees handle the application process. "All the candidates think we owe them something," she says. "'When do you think I can start?' they ask." All demand to know why they're not hired. Myra Fasner, now the director of human resources at Schick Technologies in Long Island City, used to direct the support staff at a local drug manufacturer. Many workers expected to advance automati-

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cally, regardless of effort, she says. "Their attitude would blow my mind," she recalls. "They would complain: 'This one's getting that; how come *I'm* not getting that?—this isn't fair.' But the person would have just arrived!"

Stock workers in Al Rodriguez's chain of Associated Supermarkets work more slowly when they feel they're not getting paid what they deserve. "Why give a guy a raise if he slows down?" he asks incredulously. Workers are impatient today, Rodriguez mutters. They don't understand that someone earning $10 an hour most likely started at the minimum wage—as Rodriguez did when he began working as a delivery boy in a Queens bodega at age 12. Many of the applicants at Chase's open hiring session had quit positions at fast-food restaurants and big retail chains: the jobs demanded too much effort for too little pay. The notion that such work provided opportunity drew nothing but scorn: people who rose through the ranks "really needed the job so they kissed butt," explained one older teen derisively.

"The majority of my workers think that they are doing a good job simply by showing up."

Jean Zatorski, personnel director at Pfizer's 148-year-old pharmaceutical plant in Brownsville, Brooklyn, has lost patience with the entitlement mentality. "The majority of my workers think that they are doing a good job simply by showing up at work," she says, "and every last one of them is owed something." Seventy-three percent of Pfizer's workforce is minority, drawn largely from the surrounding community, but everyone is "being discriminated against," she reports sarcastically. Zatorski welcomes the inevitable discrimination charges when she fires an employee; all discharged workers threaten to hire an attorney. "I pray they do," she snorts; "at least then I'll be dealing with someone rational." Zatorski, who has never lost a case before the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, even has an EEOC template already prepared for her disgruntled former employees to use against her.

Inflated concerns about "respect" are often at the root of these problems. Once identified primarily with inner-city males, the obsession with respect has spread to the inner-city female population. High school senior Mary Hernandez is a case in point.

An attractive girl with an eye-catching figure, Mary works at the law firm of Ohrenstein and Brown, high up in the rococo Helmsley Building. She is there as a participant in the Board of Education's cooperative work-experience program, in which juniors and seniors alternate weeks in school and at an office throughout the semester. Mary has already decided that she doesn't like her employers: they yell at her. "When the mail comes in, they just cry for everything! It's ridiculous—they're grown men!" she fumes. Mary has developed a strategy for responding to such seemingly irrational demands: she ignores them. "Personally, I'm, like, in my own world; I keep on walkin'," she says proudly. In so doing, she believes, she is subtly modifying the attorneys' behavior: "Seein' the fact here that I'm not going to accept it," she says, "it makes my job a little easier. They speak at me a little more calmly."

At the heart of Mary's campaign is the question of respect: "If I respect you, you'd better respect me," she warns. Such a bargain sounds reasonable enough. But Mary's understanding of her relation to the firm is skewed. According to her supervisors, whatever rancor the firm's attorneys direct at her is the result of her own inattention. She regularly delivers mail and documents to the wrong people, they say, confusing, in particular,

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two attorneys with very dissimilar names. "I told her: 'You have to get people's initials right,'" says facilities manager Harry Schulberg. "She responded: 'Why? All they're going to do is complain.'" Moreover, Mary has a problem with authority: "If you ask her to do something, she will look at you and 'grrrr,'" adds Schulberg.

Absenteeism plagues many New York workplaces. Clay-Park Labs is the largest manufacturer of topical nonprescription drugs in the U.S. and one of the major employers in the Bronx. In order to ensure a full staff every day, it has to keep 5 to 10 percent more people on its payroll than it actually needs. "On a day when everyone comes to work, they have nothing to do," says Bruce Meyer, chief officer of operations. Jason Goldenberg, a vice president of operations at Cleaners Products Supply Corp., a dry-cleaning products distribution business in Woodside, Queens, has been trying to hire two truck drivers for the last eight months but finds that people don't bother to show up for their interviews.

Persistent lateness is no less of a disruption. Julio, a tenth-grade high school dropout who works as a mechanic at Clay-Park Labs, views himself as a reliable worker. A supervisor, overhearing our conversation, laughed at this self-assessment, noting that Julio had arrived late just that morning. Julio shot back: "They don't *see* when you work! That's what's so wrong about this company. When you mess up once, they try to push you over the cliff."

Workers assume that an excuse redeems any failing, says Christine Edwards, vice president for human resources at Brooklyn Hospital. One employee who had been late 32 times in six months was always ready with an explanation, reports Edwards: "'I just couldn't get it together,' or, 'I didn't have a baby-sitter,' or, 'My mother's strung out,' or sometimes, 'But I was just 15 minutes late!'"

New York employers have discovered that they can no longer expect even rudimentary business etiquette from workers. Employment, say some disgruntled managers, is becoming more and more like baby-sitting. "We have to teach life skills—how to dress, act, answer the phone," remarks Roberta Tennenberg, an office manager at Eagle Electric, an electric components manufacturer and the largest employer in Long Island City. "Somehow we're not communicating manners in this society," she concludes. On the first day of Con Edison's employee orientation program, three people will inevitably be sitting with their hats on, says Tom Shanahan, manager of recruitment and retention. "I ask them: 'Is it cold?' and they look at me like I'm crazy." People have no sense of appropriate behavior, sighs Chase's Ryan. "They chew gum, they ask inappropriate questions, they have a hostile attitude."

Personal appearance poses a minefield of problems. Brooklyn Hospital's Christine Edwards interviewed an 18-year-old who showed up with two earrings, a nose ring, and a hat. "I told him to doff his cap," she recalls. "'The next time you go see someone for a job,' I said, 'take the ring out. Your girlfriend may love it; I'm not so impressed.'" Marleen Baez, coordinator of recruiting at Arthur Andersen, the big accounting and consulting firm, has to keep constant tabs on how female co-op students dress: they are coming to the office in ever-shorter skirts and ever-more-transparent blouses, she reports.

Seeming victories over grooming can melt away overnight. Geraldine Gallashaw, a vice president of personnel at the Bank of New York, advised a student intern against wearing slacks. The girl acceded—but soon started showing up in the tiniest of skirts. Gallashaw told her that such attire was inappropriate and suggested that she find something more conservative, in blue or black. In the end, Gallashaw had to reverse her position on slacks, figuring it was the lesser of two evils.

When a New York–based cruise line recently learned that executives from its European parent company were planning a visit, the local CEO faced a crisis: what to do with the employees? "The staff had no social graces; their physical appearance put them off the scale," recalls Jim Shriner of Fantus Consulting, an advisor to the company. The CEO's solution: he hid his employees, carefully steering the European visi-

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tors away from the offices where the most embarrassing-looking members of the staff worked.

Rudeness and recalcitrance have raised the friction level in many workplaces. Eagle Electric's Tennenberg sees a constant lack of cooperation among employees. The company's supply clerks become surly if other employees call about an unfilled supply request: "I'll get it when I'm ready," they snap back. "Most of my people fail because they don't have 'sandbox skills,'" explains Pfizer's Zatorski. She reports that many harass one another verbally and sometimes even come to blows, often along ethnic lines.

Sometimes even bosses get the same surly treatment. Many of the short-lived but majestically haughty secretaries of a local commercial real estate developer have repeatedly told him, "I don't do that." For former chicken impresario Michael W., the problem is simple: "By the time these kids are in high school, they have no concept of following orders." As one recruit at the Chase open hiring session put it, "I don't really pay no attention to no supervisors."

Outsiders, naturally, receive the worst treatment of all. The basic problem with receptionists, says Jim Minogue, director of human relations at Arthur Andersen, is that "you can't hide them from clients." Employers across the city tell of customer-service representatives or receptionists who fly off the handle when a customer asks "too many" questions. "Throughout the industry it's becoming increasingly difficult to find people who do not become belligerent when they have to answer lots of questions," observes Burke Stimson, a spokesman for AT&T. Such difficulties have driven customer-service centers out of the cities, he says, and into the Midwest, where there still exists a "reservoir of people who are helpful, civilized, and courteous."

Insecurity about basic skills often explains the testiness of New York workers. Employees who are in over their heads on the job can become defensive and hostile. Without sufficient analytic and cognitive skills, they are at a loss to help customers solve communications or billing problems, says Thomas O'Gara, a former human relations manager at NYNEX. And if the problem lies outside their formal area of responsibility, they often refuse to investigate any further or become confrontational.

Basic skills such as reading and math are hard to come by in the New York market. Entry-level applicants at Eagle Electric have accused office manager Tennenberg of giving "trick" questions on the entry exam, such as: what is 5 percent of 100? Some demand to use a calculator. AT&T's Stimson overheard a company secretary ask her office mates what state Connecticut is in; she felt no chagrin upon learning the answer, apparently regarding it as arcane knowledge. Illiteracy and cognitive deficits have thwarted companies that try to upgrade their workers' skills. Nursing assistants at Brooklyn Hospital have been unable to complete a refresher course in nursing because they are so deficient in reading and math. In the 1980s many banks grew so frustrated with their employees' inability to learn that they simply "dumbed down" jobs, splitting what used to be a single task into several. Rather than processing an entire loan, for example, a worker would be responsible for just one-third of the transaction.

The most common complaint about worker skills, however, is that prospective native-born employees don't speak English properly. Arthur Andersen's Baez finds the verbal skills of her co-op students "atrocious—they aren't able to articulate." Oliver Lednicer, the president of Kruysman Redweld, a printer and binder in SoHo, has virtually stopped sending business correspondence because his employees can't spell. Leaving aside questions of attitude, finding a competent receptionist in New York has become an ordeal. "Companies tell me: 'I don't care if they type or have ever seen a computer. If they can write and speak, send them,'" says Diane Cohen, an account manager with the Irene Cohen employment agency. Employers look for résumés showing a midwestern origin, says Cohen, because midwesterners tend to speak more clearly and correctly.

Poor language skills transcend race. But the problem becomes particularly thorny when it concerns black English. Several local firms offer courses in "interpersonal communication skills"—

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sometimes as a last-ditch attempt to address the "Ebonics" issue. Though I encountered the question "May I ax who's calling?" at several major firms, companies try to avoid employing people who don't speak standard English. "We would absolutely *not* hire someone" with such diction, asserts Myra Fasner of Schick Technologies. But it's "a very touchy subject," she concedes. Job recruiter Diane Cohen has urged school principals to teach their students to speak correctly. "Some say I'm a racist," she says. "Others say: 'We can't do that because *we'll* be called racists.'"

Immigrant workers are often illiterate in both their native language and English—a "staggering problem" for New York City manufacturers, according to Will Saunders, director of the LaGuardia Urban Center for Economic Development, a nonprofit job-training and management-consulting operation at LaGuardia Community College. The center has sought state funding for English as a Second Language (ESL) job training, but the Empire State Development Corporation has balked, saying that the need was so great that "there wouldn't be funds left for anything else." Many manufacturers nevertheless feel compelled to offer ESL classes on site.

Starting in the 1980s many of New York's most venerable corporate citizens began shipping jobs out of the city in a desperate search for skilled workers (as well as for cheaper real estate and friendlier regulations). Chase Manhattan, Citibank, Salomon Brothers, Mutual of New York, and KLM moved operations like money transfers and data processing to the South and Midwest or left the city altogether. "Labor is the biggest single issue regarding corporate relocation," says Charles Galloway of Moran, Stahl & Boyer, a relocation company. "The employer will tell you it's costs, but labor is 70 percent of the equation."

In any local economy with a disproportionate number of poorly educated people, employers have to pay a premium for basic skills. In New York, competition for well-spoken, well-mannered workers, especially secretaries and receptionists, has become ferocious. Companies that take too long picking from clerical candidates invariably lose their top choices. Reasonably skilled secretaries—ordinary secretaries, not high-flying executive assistants—can command $50,000 a year, reputed to be the highest rate in the country. Smaller companies, which can't afford to pay these rates, suffer. If you pay below the midpoint in the Manhattan clerical market, it's hard to find someone who can read, says Dennis Donovan, senior managing director of the Wadley Donovan Group, a corporate relocation firm.

Manufacturers in New York fare only slightly better. The city's huge influx of immigrants has kept entry-level factory wages low, and the industriousness of these newcomers, according to one executive, has encouraged native workers to upgrade their skills. Still, manufacturers considering relocation must weigh quantity against quality: immigrant minimum-wage workers often deliver minimal work, say some employers. Some managers challenge the stereotype of the hard-driving immigrant. Schick Technologies' Fasner says that plenty of foreign-born workers quickly fall into "bad American habits. They say, 'Okay, now I have a job; I don't have to work as hard.'" Companies with a large immigrant workforce often suffer from absenteeism just as much as those with native labor.

Candid discussions of workforce quality may be taboo in the corporate world, but competing states and localities know how to speak in code. Economic development agencies elsewhere in the country gladly furnish disgruntled New York companies with statistics on the productivity and education of their own workers. The North Carolina Department of Commerce, for example, puts out-of-state employers in touch with local human resources managers to discuss such usually confidential matters as turnover rates, absenteeism, and trainability.

New York hardly shines in such comparisons. Clay-Park Labs learned that several companies that had recently relocated to the Tarheel State saw their absentee rates drop from 10 percent to 3 percent. Sequins International, a company in Woodside, recently looked into the operations of a similar Pennsylvania firm: its rival needed only one supervisor for every 45 workers, compared

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to one for every six in its own plant. True, the Pennsylvania company paid its workers $4 an hour more, but it needed 75 percent fewer supervisors. The overall result, according to a job analyst from New York: the company is making money "hand over fist."

Companies that have left New York have experienced a dramatic improvement in worker output. J. P. Morgan started moving its back-office operations to Delaware ten years ago. Productivity increased well over 20 percent. Though Delaware's longer average workweek explains some of the improvement, the bank's new employees were more willing to "go the extra mile," explains Morgan's facilities manager, David Singleton. In New York, if the check processors finished that day's batch of checks early, they read the paper, Singleton recalls. When the Delaware workers complete a task ahead of schedule, they ask what they should do next. The first time this happened, supervisors were shocked: they held an emergency meeting to come up with useful work for them. Outside New York, says Singleton, "you just don't find the same jaundiced cynicism about work."

> **"When the Delaware workers complete a task ahead of schedule, they ask what they should do next."**

In 1991 Salomon Brothers began moving about 600 back-office jobs from New York to Tampa. Output increased up to threefold. Kathy Rocca, Salomon's vice president for human relations, credits the education, commitment, and flexibility of the company's Florida workers. "We wanted to change the workplace culture, and the only way to do that was to physically remove ourselves from New York," she explains. The international relief organization CARE relocated to Atlanta four years ago in search of lower costs. It got higher productivity. "Finding people in New York was a horrendous problem," says Tim Aston, former director of international staffing. Turnover and street cynicism were rampant, he remembers. "There's a whole different kind of worker here," says Aston. "People seem more appreciative to have a job."

Companies that remain in the city face escalating hiring costs. Finding competent workers means sifting through ever more applicants—an expensive process. Pfizer takes 5 percent of its applicants; Macy's, 2 percent. In 1987, 84 percent of New York Telephone's 90,000 applicants failed its math and English exam, prompting a sharp public debate about low worker skills. NYNEX (New York Telephone's successor) now refuses to disclose its entry-level pass rate.

Many companies have given up on testing entirely, mostly for fear of discrimination suits but also because testing so severely limits the available candidates. When Clay-Park Labs introduced a math test, its 10 percent acceptance rate dropped to less than 3 percent. Other companies, like Blue Cross, don't have a clear pass-fail line for their entry-level tests but use ranges instead—a candidate in the "poor" range may still get hired if doing so improves the company's "diversity profile." But such "poor" candidates have a higher than usual rate of not working out on the job.

Training—some of it remedial—also carries a big price tag. Arthur Andersen has to offer classes in ESL, self-presentation, and writing, among other skills. NYNEX and Con Edison immediately enroll new hires in training programs, thus putting them on the payroll well before they actually begin doing work. Robert Damato, a spokesman at the Learning Center, Con Edison's huge modern training facility at water's edge in Long Island City, says that the utility is "very concerned about what the worker will look like

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20 years down the line . . . . It's why we retrain." Unlike other companies, of course, Con Edison has nowhere else to go.

Reasonably enough, employers connect the behavior they see on the job with what happens in New York City's classrooms. If the schools tolerate truancy, poor manners, and mediocre performance, they argue, what can you expect at work? The Board of Education says it has gotten the message from employers, but its response to date has been sadly beside the point. What *would* make a difference in training future workers is strict standards of learning and behavior. Instead, the Board of Education continues to pursue fancy new educational theories while allowing near chaos in the classroom.

One of the more recent educational fads to hit schools nationwide is the "school-to-work" concept, formalized in a vague 1994 federal law called the School-to-Work Opportunities Act. The essential idea is to make education more relevant to the workplace through "contextualized learning"—teaching math in a medical setting, for example—while building closer relations with employers. If schools in the inner city functioned at all adequately, perhaps educators could justify such experiments. In light of the actual conditions in most urban classrooms, however, any new program that distracts schools from teaching fundamentals and maintaining order is counterproductive.

Arlene Tomosoiu's ninth-grade business-skills course demonstrates the irrelevance of such "practical" education. Tomosoiu, a gregarious woman with a large mane of blond hair, is the official "school-to-work" coordinator at Martin Luther King Jr. High School behind Lincoln Center in Manhattan, a grandiose modern building whose metal detectors yield a steady harvest of box cutters and penknives. Her students have all chosen "business" as their high school concentration. But does the school prepare them for a business career?

At the start of a class in April, two girls wore their music headsets, another slouched with her head on the desk, and many students sat with their backpacks in their laps. Tomosoiu's foghorn call to take off the headsets eventually produced a sullen acquiescence, but within minutes one of the girls had hers back on. Tomosoiu ignored her for a while and then called out: "Simone, you're not listening to me!" Simone, a gawky, large-boned girl with crimson-streaked hair, pulled the headset down around her neck again, but as surely as helium rises, one earphone soon found its way back on.

Tomosoiu uses a prepackaged curriculum called "Work Achievement and Values in Education," which is sprinkled with such pop-psychology assignments as labeling behavior passive, aggressive, or assertive. The assignment that day concerned the impression that one's physical appearance makes on other people. Tomosoiu passed out a list of 16 factors for the students to consider: "wrinkled clothes," "chest showing," "daily bath or shower," "light-colored polish on nails," and so forth. The gist of the exercise was to rank the factors that would influence an employer in hiring an applicant.

First, however, came the formation of collaborative groups. Tomosoiu subscribes to the tenets of "collaborative" learning, yet another dearly beloved ed-school theory that fails in actual classrooms. Tomosoiu asked the students, densely packed in rows of chairs, to form several circles. Nothing happened. "Simone, sit over there!" "No, I don' wanna sit over there!" "Fine, someone else then," said Tomosoiu. Eventually, the students dragged their chairs into a few clusters.

Tomosoiu stressed that the "groups" were to "reach a consensus" on the factors they considered most important, a seemingly utopian command in a classroom where order was already so fragile. A cacophony of chatter soon followed ("I can't concentrate like this; I need music!"), and minutes later most of the students had scribbled some numbers on their sheets—individually rather than collaboratively, of course. In the meantime one girl had stood up at the front of the room to snap a picture of her classmates, and another had busied herself sorting playing cards.

When emissaries from the various "groups" recited their lists, it was immediately clear that this ninth-grade class contained many fourth-grade readers:

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students stopped in the middle of words and phrases while barreling right through commas and periods. Tomosoiu then suggested that the students identify which factors were positive and which negative—an undemanding assignment unless someone thinks that "body odor" is a job qualification or "clean breath" a hindrance. But even this request produced some static, as Simone shouted out, "I didn't know what the hell 'scuffed shoes' was!" The only moment of somewhat focused attention in the class came when a girl named Debby objected strenuously to the item "trimmed nails." "What is the problem with people today? They don't hire you because you have dirty nails!" she cried.

Tomosoiu bounced up to me afterward with a broad, satisfied smile and asked, "So, how'd you like my class?" When I expressed a certain amazement at its unbuttoned quality, she responded, "Oh, these kids are *well-behaved* compared to other classes." There is no reason to disbelieve her, and in her defense, she's struggling against chaotic home environments and parents who are often indifferent to education. But it is hard to imagine that anything from this class will stick when the students go for their first job interviews. If the students learned anything, it was that they can ignore authority with impunity. For such "progressive" education only exacerbates these children's already-hostile attitude toward authority. Sheila Gutter, project director for school-to-work programs in Manhattan, fretted to me about "chalk-and-talk" teachers who make their students sit in straight rows despite having movable chairs in their classrooms. If such teachers do indeed still exist, they deserve praise, not criticism. School may be the only source of socializing order in many of their pupils' lives.

Even schools focused on business themes, like the grandly titled High School of Economics and Finance and the Murry Bergtraum School for Business Careers, which now also enjoy federal support under the School-to-Work Opportunities Act, fail to address the underlying reality of poor preparation and nonexistent socialization. An English teacher from the Wall Street–based and –supported High School of Economics and Finance told me that the students in his classes were "lost": they don't do the reading; they run wild in the classroom. Defenders of the school point to its much-touted weekly seminars with local CEOs and entrepreneurs. If students had already mastered reading, writing, and self-discipline, such variations on basic academic themes would be enriching. Given that they have not, *any* effort to forge "school-to-work" linkages or to "contextualize" learning to fit a work environment is misdirected.

Of course, traditional vocational education—frank and unapologetic preparation for a trade—is quite another matter, but that is not what school-to-work is about, as its advocates hasten to say. The city's educational bureaucrats are so terrified that someone will accuse them of promoting vocational education—vulnerable as it is to the hysterical charge of "tracking"—that Chancellor Rudy Crew has reportedly asked the Board of Education to refer to its programs not as "school-to-work" but as "school-to-career." Explains Manhattan school-to-work director Gutter: "The chancellor thinks there's a stigma attached to 'work.'"

For New York's schools, the only connection to the real world that counts is the ability to turn out self-disciplined students who have mastered the rudiments of knowledge. Businessmen understand this. Last year the National Alliance of Business, the Business Roundtable, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce agreed upon an education agenda that focused exclusively on elevating academic standards; it offered nary a word about school-to-work. In essence, it told schools: do what you once did best; we'll take care of the rest.

Throughout New York's history, a talented and energetic labor force has been one of the city's premier assets. Workers flocked to New York from the provinces and from abroad looking for an opportunity to make the most of their talents, and companies flourished here because they could find employees equal to almost any task. Today this is no longer the case: New York's labor force is a liability in important respects rather than an asset. So all the talk current today about saving the city's failed schools and reversing its culture of entitlement and passivity has an intensely practical urgency. The city's economic future depends on it.

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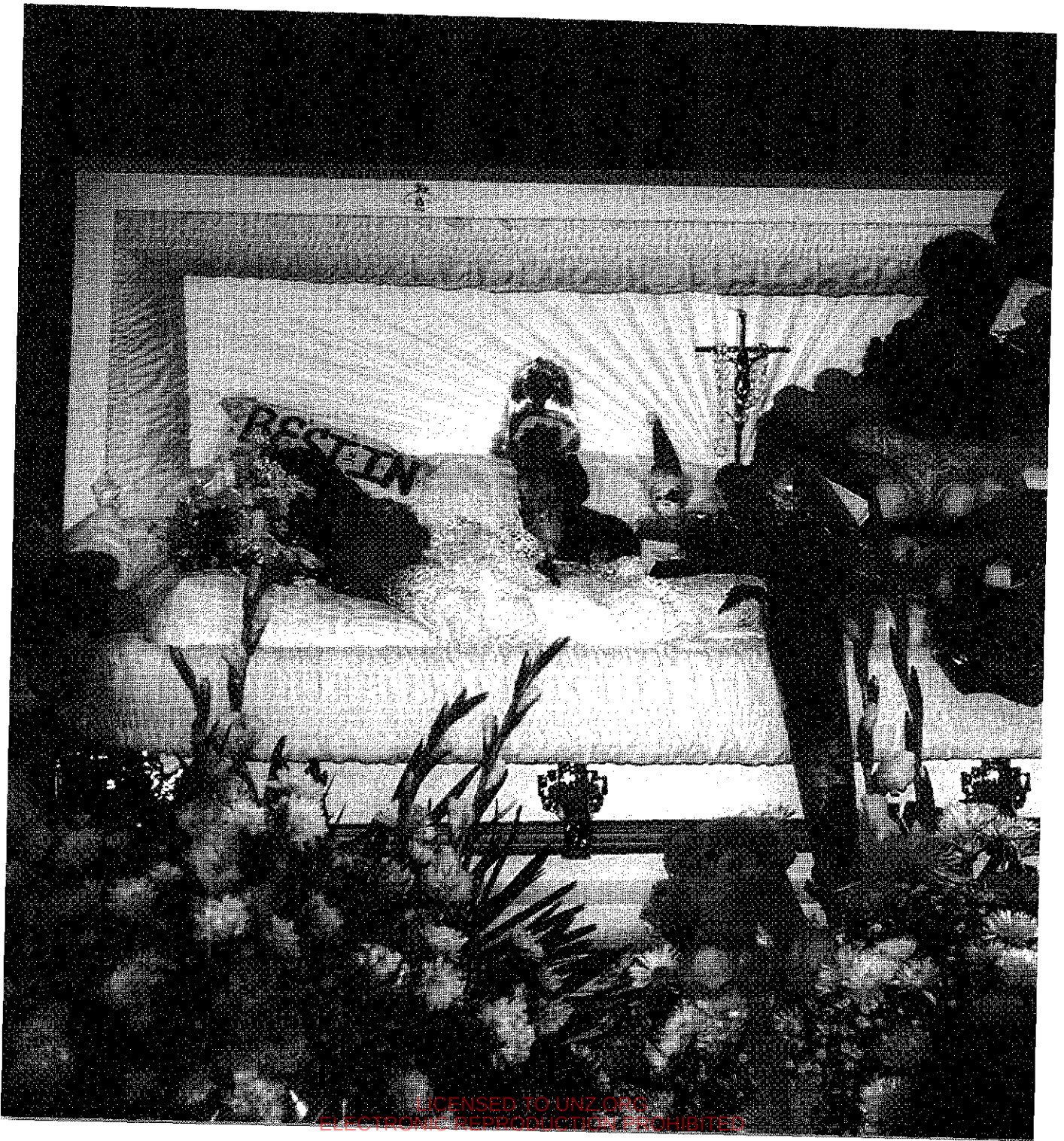

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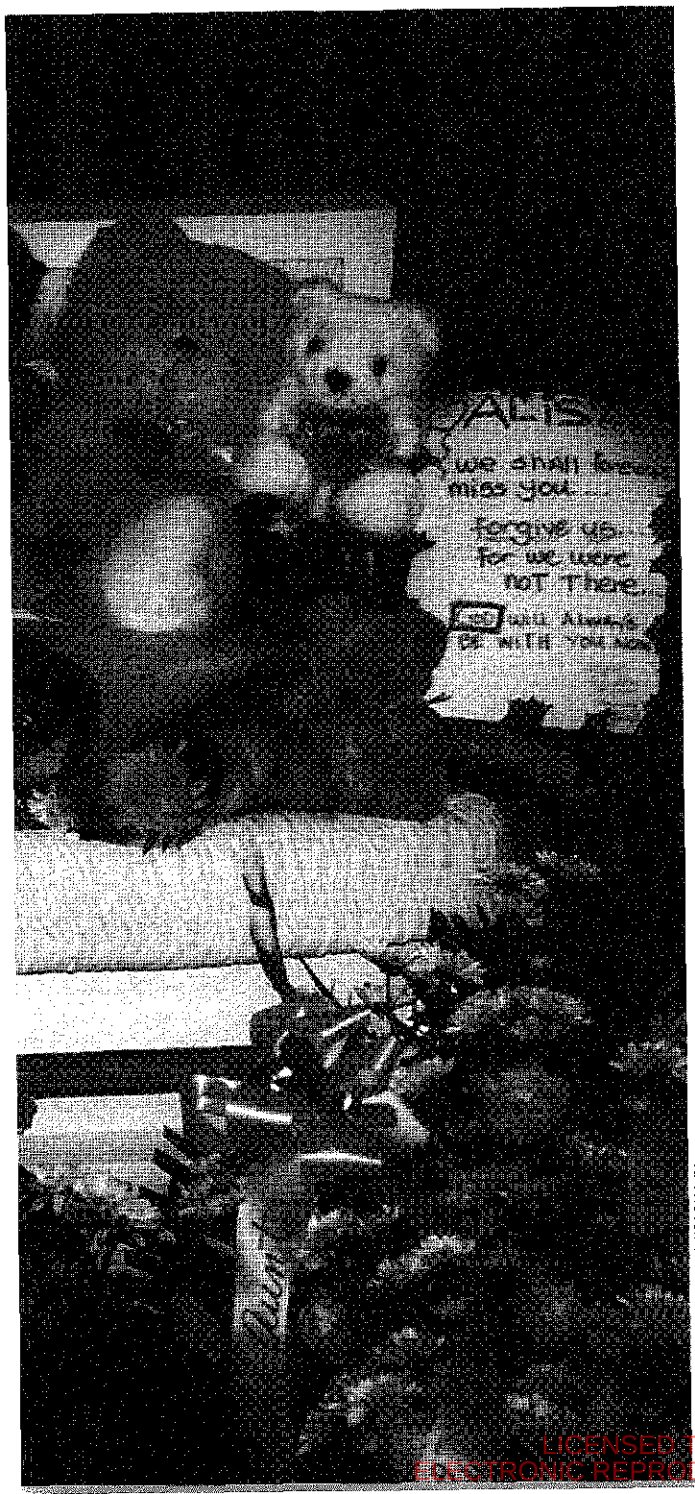
Fatal Preservation



AP PHOTO/MARK LENNIHAN

Elisa Izquierdo, 1989–1995.

Dennis Saffran

On the day before Easter the mentally unstable mother of a five-year-old Bronx boy named Daytwon Bennett tied him to a chair and beat him to death with a broomstick. Starving when he died—he weighed just 30 pounds—Daytwon had suffered "multiple blunt impact injuries" over a long period, according to the autopsy report. Daytwon was not unknown to the child welfare authorities. They had removed him from his mother's custody and placed him in foster care on four separate occasions in his short lifetime—only to uproot him and send him back to her for more abuse each time.

Daytwon's killing was just the latest in a parade of tragedies in which children have been murdered or severely injured after judges and caseworkers have returned them to—or allowed them to remain with—violent, deranged, or drug-addicted parents. In November 1995, New York and the nation recoiled in horror at the death of six-year-old Elisa Izquierdo at the hands of her crack-addicted mother, who had regained custody of the girl despite the anguished pleas of her other relatives and preschool teachers.

That same month a Bronx judge ordered 17-month-old Rayvon Evans removed from the foster mother with whom he had always lived and returned to the drug-addicted and alcoholic mother who had abandoned him at birth. Three months later she scalded him to death, and two months after that, when the stench got

"Family preservation" may please advocates, but it kills kids.

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too strong, her boyfriend tossed the decomposing body out the window into a dumpster.

A few months before Elisa died, the drug-addicted mother of a two-year-old Long Island boy punched him hard enough to rupture his intestines and kill him—because he would not stop crying. She had broken his arm on a previous visit, but social workers had "reunited" the two of them five days before his death. That same week the press reported the story of four-year-old Margarita Seeley, whose drug-dealing biological mother forced her to live in a closet and burned her with cigarettes and scalding water after getting the girl back from the loving foster mother who had raised her for the first three years of her life.

Most of the press commentary about these tragedies portrayed these children as casualties of an overworked, understaffed, and underfunded bureaucracy that "let them slip through the cracks." The subtext: more money will solve the problem, allowing authorities to investigate more reports of abuse. But half of the 1,500 children killed by their parents throughout the country each year are *already* known to the child welfare system. They are victims not of underfunding but of a more fundamental scandal: a "family preservation" policy that the federal government and 30 states, including New York, have carried to absurd and deadly extremes, putting children like Daytwon Bennett and Elisa Izquierdo at grave risk in the name of a skewed notion of civil liberties and parental rights.

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It is hard to imagine a more conservative-sounding name for a social policy than family preservation. But in fact, those on the Left who are usually the most hostile to "family values" and parental rights have shaped the policy into its present form and are its most vehement and dogmatic advocates. Family preservation is a classic example of a seemingly sensible and humane liberal reform gone awry because of the ideological single-mindedness of its supporters. The policy now badly hurts those it was meant to help.

Family preservation became a rallying cry in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when a new generation of lawyers and social workers, reacting to the racial and class injustices of the past, charged that culturally biased caseworkers too often removed children from troubled but essentially functional and loving poor families. These reformers wanted to make an attempt to keep such families together—with support services like emergency economic aid and intensive counseling—before removing a child from the home. With help, they argued, these families could weather temporary crises caused by financial or emotional distress—situations in which there was, at worst, short-term neglect or isolated abuse that did not seriously threaten a child. At the time advocates of family preservation never suggested that it would apply to cases in which there was a history or risk of life-threatening abuse because of a parent's drug addiction, mental illness, or sociopathy.

By elevating the right of low-income parents to raise their children above the welfare worker's view of the children's best interests, family preservation jibed with the rights revolution then under way. And indeed, it was hard to quarrel with the reformers' basic claim: it is better not to uproot a child from a "troubled but loving" family, even if conditions in the home are less than ideal.

In the late 1970s legislators began to pass laws to institutionalize family preservation, in language meant to limit the policy to cases where parents did not seriously endanger their children. In order to qualify for federal funding of their foster-care systems under the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980, states had to make "reasonable efforts" both to keep a family together before taking away a child and to "reunify" the family after-

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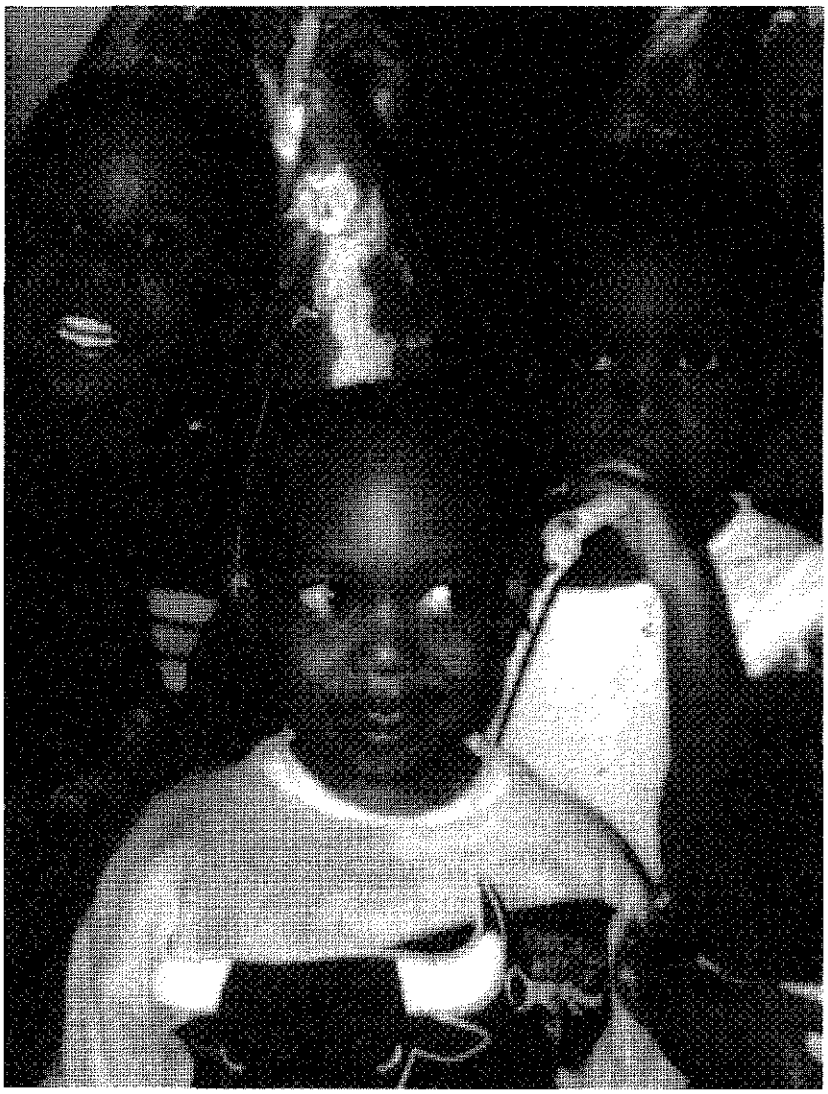
ward. Similarly, the New York State Child Welfare Reform Act of 1979 called for "preventive services" when it was "reasonable to believe" that they would enable a child "to remain with or be returned to his family"—that is, when it was reasonable to believe that providing these services would significantly improve the parent's behavior and thus make it safe to leave the child in the home. Subsequent New York legislation required that "reasonable efforts" be made to keep families together "where appropriate."



COURTESY ROSIE SANDERS

Daytwon Bennett, 1991-1997.

In the late 1960s, when activists first began pushing for family preservation, one could plausibly claim that "troubled but loving" families were not uncommon, that there were sporadically abusive parents who might change their ways given the proper support. This key premise of family preservation was far less tenable a decade later, however—at the very moment that legislators began to incorporate the policy into law. By then, the prophecies of observers like Daniel Patrick Moynihan had come true: the problems of the inner-city poor—single-mother families, crime, unemployment, welfare dependency—had grown more and more intractable, only to deepen in the 1980s with the crack cocaine epidemic. Seemingly oblivious to this transformation, child welfare authorities continued to prescribe parenting classes and other "preventive services" that were intended for "troubled but loving" families—despite the fact that today's abusive parents are so often capable of maiming, torturing, and sexually abusing their children.

What led officials routinely to apply family preservation policy to cases involving such parents? Perverse incentives had a lot to do with it. Because states risk the loss of federal funds only for doing too little to preserve families but not

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for doing too much, the natural inclination of local bureaucrats has been to err on the side of keeping children in dangerous families. The influential Edna McConnell Clark and Annie E. Casey Foundations have reinforced this tendency by devoting millions of dollars to preventive services and promoting them as the first option in even the most extreme cases of abuse. The Clark Foundation, which argues that what others term "'abuse' . . . may reflect a group's cultural norms," has spent some $40 million on family preservation programs over the last decade.

The dogmatic ideology of these foundations has found a receptive audience among the members of today's social-work establishment, many of whom almost always consider it "reasonable" and "appropriate" to keep families together—and unacceptably "judgmental" to do otherwise. Thus, a caseworker interviewed several years ago in a Clark Foundation–funded Bill Moyers television special deplored the "labeling process" that "categorizes" a crack-addicted single mother as different from a working family unable to afford day care. "If we're a country that believes in the integrity of families," the caseworker obtusely declared, "we should keep all families together."

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Because of this unwillingness of contemporary liberalism to make distinctions among what it regards as different cultures and styles of life, many caseworkers now strive to keep even the most sadistic "families" together. In effect, family preservation has created a sense that all parents—no matter how abusive—have an unchallengeable right to possess their children and to receive government services that will make it easier for them to do so. Consider the chilling case of Rufus Chisholm, a Bronx man who killed his five-year-old son by hanging him from a coat rack, rupturing his liver, and crushing his chest—all for taking a piece of cake from the refrigerator. For Chisholm's surviving children, social workers recommended "return to parent" as the "permanency goal." Another example of this mind-set appeared shortly after Elisa Izquierdo's death, when a social worker wrote an op-ed piece for the New York *Daily News* defending preservation services even for "families who may stand by helplessly as one of their own is beaten or murdered by an out-of-control parent."

Unsurprisingly, this philosophy now dominates the legal services establishment as well. The Legal Aid Society and the Legal Services Corporation, which represent many accused parents in abuse and neglect proceedings, have been among the most zealous proponents of family preservation policies. This bias presents a tragic conflict of interest in New York, since the "law guardians" appointed under the Family Court Act to represent the children in these proceedings are almost always Legal Aid attorneys. Meant to provide the court with a third party that stands apart from the parent and the child welfare authorities and speaks only for the child's best interests, Legal Aid law guardians have often proved advocates for family preservation at any cost.

A few months after the authorities had discovered bruises on Daytwon Bennett's face and taken him from his mother for the fourth time, for instance, his Legal Aid law guardian sided with the mother's attorney and successfully argued that he return home, for what would be the last time. The chief of Legal Aid's juvenile rights division told the *New York Times* that "there was no indication that the child was in any danger." But the foster parents who cared for Daytwon for three years say that his Legal Aid law guardian never even met with the child. Legal Aid law guardians for Elisa Izquierdo and Rayvon Evans also supported their return to their biological mothers.

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Provisions of the child abuse laws meant to recognize the honest efforts of parents to overcome drug addiction—and passed in the days before crack—have further distorted family preservation policy. Prior to 1981, proof of a parent's drug abuse or addiction created a presumption of child neglect under New York State law. But a 1981 amendment bars such a presumption so long as the parent has merely *enrolled* in a rehabilitation program. The parent is not even required to complete the program, much less to have been drug-free for any stretch of time. "This change," as the Children's Aid Society reported in 1996, "made it harder . . . to prove neglect when parents enrolled in a program but did not stop using drugs—a common experience given the low success rate of treatment."

Thus, Elisa Izquierdo's mother, Awilda Lopez, regained custody of her children after undergoing drug rehabilitation, and she kept them despite quickly lapsing back into crack addiction. This loophole in the law also lay at the root of another of the city's grisliest child abuse cases. Last August authorities found the shriveled, emaciated body of four-year-old Nadine Lockwood in the Manhattan apartment of her drug-addicted mother. A victim of deliberate starvation, Nadine weighed a sickening 15 pounds at death. Several years earlier the city had begun a neglect proceeding against her mother, Carla Lockwood, after another one of her five children tested positive for cocaine at birth. But the city closed the case six months later when Lockwood started attending a drug treatment program.

The elaborate taxpayer-supported services that go into family preservation add a note of farce to the tragedy. Child welfare agencies furnish the most dysfunctional and abusive "families" with expensive help well beyond the financial reach of most middle-class families. New York State regulations provide for the payment of homemakers and housekeepers to cook, clean, and shop for parents deemed to be in danger of losing their children to foster care. Patrick Murphy, public guardian of Cook County, Illinois, was one of the original architects of family preservation and is now one of its leading critics. As he sees it, such services lavishly reward irresponsible and criminal behavior and are an affront to the many poor people who struggle against tremendous odds to raise their children well.

Family preservation advocates say that this costly assistance reduces the number of foster-care placements and thus saves money in the long run. But Richard Gelles, director of the Family Violence Research Program at the University of Rhode Island and another leading champion of family preservation turned heretic, notes in a recent book that no evidence exists to support this view. More to the point, he argues, it is both offensive and circular to celebrate family preservation because it reduces the number of foster-care placements. By definition, efforts at family preservation entail not placing a child in foster care, at least for a time. The more extreme the adherence to family preservation, the more likely it is that a child will never be placed, regardless of the parent's behavior. By this Orwellian measure, Daytwon Bennett and Elisa Izquierdo were family preservation success stories.

As Gelles rightly argues, "the main outcome variable should be child safety." Using this more logical and humane test, researchers at the University of Chicago conducted a two-year study of the Illinois "Family First" program and found that family preservation services made no difference: 25 percent of parents receiving intensive help abused their children again within a year, compared to 22 percent of parents in a control group that received no special assistance.

Despite its manifest failures, family preservation has long enjoyed the unquestioning support of legislators. Indeed, in the Family Preservation and Child Protection Reform Act of 1993, Congress allocated $1 billion over five years to support family preservation programs in the states.

But recently lawmakers have begun to move haltingly in the direction of reform. In 1996 Congress amended the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) to bar states receiving federal assistance under the law from requiring the reunification of children with parents who have been convicted of the murder, manslaughter, or serious bodily injury of one of their children. While

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an improvement, the amendment has serious defects. Because it applies only to parents with a previous *criminal conviction* for the most extreme forms of child abuse, it will affect only a handful of even the most egregious cases. Moreover, because it only prohibits states from *requiring* reunification in these extreme cases, states may still *allow* it, and individual judges may still *order* it. Finally, the federal funds at stake under CAPTA amount to far less than those tied to the federal foster-care law's requirement of "reasonable efforts" to keep families together, which Congress left intact.

More encouragingly, in April the House of Representatives voted to let states bypass family preservation efforts where a child has suffered "aggravated" abuse. Unfortunately, the bill would allow states to define "aggravated" abuse as narrowly as they wished, and judges could still decide to compel family preservation in such cases. What's more, the bill doesn't protect the siblings of such children: states would still have to make "reasonable efforts" to keep them with their demonstrably abusive parents. A bill pending in the Senate, which provides significant new funds for family preservation programs, contains similar loopholes that judges and social workers committed to the old orthodoxy would surely exploit.

Legislators should make it far easier in cases of severe abuse to terminate parental rights and free children for adoption, giving seriously abused kids a chance to live in safe, permanent homes.

If we are to avert future tragedies, both Congress and the New York State Legislature must enact legislation that will strictly limit family preservation policy to its original intent. They must amend existing law so that it declares the obvious: that it is *not* "reasonable" or "appropriate" to attempt to preserve or reunify a family when a parent has starved, tortured, sexually abused, severely injured, or abandoned a child. In addition, legislators in Albany must change state law to allow a parent's drug abuse or addiction to be used as evidence of neglect unless the parent has not only completed a rehabilitation program but has also been drug-free for at least a year. State lawmakers should also insist that law guardians have no affiliation with any organization, such as the Legal Aid Society, that routinely represents accused parents in the same proceedings.

The State Legislature should also *require* judges in abuse proceedings to consider a parent's previous abuse of another child—something that current law merely permits. A recent Suffolk County grand jury report documented a case in which a court allowed a 13-month-old boy to remain with his family despite a medical examination showing that he had had 13 broken ribs and two other broken bones *and* despite the fact that his two-year-old brother had died of similar injuries just two months before. Richard Gelles reports that it is not uncommon for judges and caseworkers, imbued with the spirit of family preservation and a twisted notion of due process, to decline even to examine the case files of other horribly abused children in a household for fear of compromising their objectivity.

Finally, state and federal legislators should make it far easier in cases of severe abuse to terminate parental rights and free children for adoption, giving seriously abused kids a chance to live in safe, permanent homes. Current law does not allow the termination process even to begin until a child has been in foster care for a year and further "diligent efforts" to reunify the family, on which it places no time limit, have been exhausted. As a result, abused children usually either languish indefinitely in foster care while social workers strive to "rehabilitate" their parents, or bounce back and forth between abusive parents and constantly changing foster homes.

Without these fundamental reforms, staffing increases and bureaucratic tinkering designed to "plug the cracks" in the child welfare system will be useless. If there are to be no more Daytwons or Elisas, the law must insist that families that grossly abuse children are not worth preserving. •

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Raising Children for an Uncivil Society

Kay S. Hymowitz

Today's child-rearing experts believe that children civilize themselves. Should we be surprised by the results?

Recently I rebuked my nine-year-old daughter for some especially obnoxious back talk. "It's a free country," she retorted with that know-it-all sneer second nature to her generation. Her words, familiar ammunition in living-room wars for decades now, point to one of the cultural contradictions of American childhood. In order to become individuals capable of self-determination—capable of freedom—we need years of surveillance, orders, and control. It's a free country, maybe, but it takes a heavily regulated living room.

For it's in the living room that children undergo what sociologist Norbert Elias calls the "civilizing process." During their early years children must be taught to make a habit of the self-restraint required for life in society, to control and modify their raw impulses and drives. Many Americans, secure in their own successful completion of this process, have come to take basic moral education for granted or to assume our liberated age can go easy on it. But in a free, temptation-filled society, the civilizing process needs to be more demanding than ever; individuals who will grow up to live in coed dorms or military barracks, for instance, must develop a massive and reliable system of inner controls. In truth, every society must be able to inculcate the young with dependable controls. "Every scheme of ethics demands that in important respects we practice self-restraint," political theorist Clifford Orwin has written. "We all first come to know morality, and for the most part continue to know it, as denial." Or as sociologist Philip Rieff puts it, "The moral life begins with renunciation."

Every culture goes about the civilizing process in its own way in order to shape citizens fitted to its requirements: as Plato understood, child rearing is a form of politics. In the early days of the republic, Americans overthrew the harsh Calvinist discipline founded on fear and absolute obedience to introduce a new child rearing that appealed to children's affections and emerging reason. Instead of breaking a child's will, Americans began gently shaping his personality. They recognized, as did foreign visitors who commented on this new democratic American family, that the young democracy required a new man, independent and self-governing.

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What they didn't recognize was how laden their new mode of child rearing was with paradox and contradiction. Parents had simultaneously to teach the habits of restraint and freedom. They had to suppress the child's egotism while cultivating his personal ambition, to instill respect for authority while nurturing critical independence, to teach convention while celebrating ingenuity, to encourage a loving commitment toward family and tradition while promoting flexibility and autonomy. If juggling the conflicting demands of autonomy and self-control seemed a difficult acrobatic performance, it nevertheless worked. Americans *were* different: flexible, creative, entrepreneurial, improvisational, but held in check by the invisible cords of cultural prohibitions.

Today, though, to read the recommendations of mainstream American child experts is to conclude that this delicate balance has collapsed. Our era's equation is all autonomy, with no restraint. As James Q. Wilson has observed, in a number of recent works on moral development, the subject of self-control is entirely absent. And why should it be otherwise? The experts' child is free of dark urges. His heart is full of compassion, his head packed with moral wisdom. Adults do not need to shape him; he is so clearheaded and sensible as to be capable almost of raising himself. In fact, adult efforts at "civilizin'," as Huck Finn called it, endanger this child, distorting his unique personality and his fundamental goodness. That's the myth, at any rate: call it the American Child Pastoral. The reality, with today's soaring rates of child crime, depression, and disaffection, suggests that the current crop of child-rearing experts have got it wrong.

They go wrong by unwittingly proving the rule well known to politicians and other malefactors: half-truths can be as misleading as outright lies. Dr. Benjamin Spock, whose *Baby and Child Care* has sold at rates second only to the Bible, is a prime case in point. He begins by defining children as social creatures, an observation few would dispute. But this clear truth dissolves into an Enlightenment fairy tale; the child Spock describes is also sensible, moderate, self-regulating, and rational, the opposite of the mysteriously primitive, anarchic, sleep-destroying creature most parents know and love. "Your baby is born to be a reasonable, friendly human being," he begins, unexceptionably enough. "Most babies have a natural tendency to establish a regular pattern of feeding and sleeping," he continues, more fancifully; they "just naturally tend . . . to fit into the family's schedule." You would never know from Spock that most babies naturally do to a family's schedule, not to mention its house, what Caligula did to Rome. Nor would you learn that rationality and regular habits do not occur spontaneously but come about largely through the energetic, day-in, day-out efforts of parents.

No, by nature Spock's child is more temperate than any philosopher. When it comes to weaning, the doctor suggests, "Take it easy and follow your baby's lead"; most babies, he says, willingly give up their pacifiers by three or four months—a fact my neighbor would be surprised to hear, having just gone cold turkey with her two-year-old, an experience that reminded her of her worst days as a volunteer at a drug rehab center. Feeding? No problem. Go ahead and feed her if you think she is hungry, he advises: "If you are mistaken, she'll merely refuse to take much."

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Faith in children's natural good judgment appears in the most unlikely times and places. During toilet training, for instance: "The most that parents can do is guide them a little," Spock assures readers. "If a mother will realize that the baby will mostly 'train' himself," he writes, endorsing the methods of another famed pediatrician and author of top-selling advice books, T. Berry Brazelton, "children should become trained *of their own free will—no coercion at all.*" Another popular work, *What to Expect: The Toddler Years*, responds to the question, "When is it time to begin?" with what has become conventional wisdom: "Look no further than your toddler for the answer. Only your child can tell you."

The experts can't ignore those occasions when children exhibit behavior that might seem a little, well . . . contrary. But don't be fooled; this is not what it seems, writes Penelope Leach, a British psychologist with a huge following in the United States—*Your Baby and Child* alone has sold well over a million and a half copies. Leach allows that a two-year-old might "rush around the room, wild and screaming, . . . fling himself on the floor, writhing, kicking, and screaming as if he were fighting with demons. He may scream and scream until he makes himself sick. He may scream and turn blue in the face."

This Neanderthal display might turn parents pale in the face, but to Leach this is the wrong response. They should be *proud*. "Your toddler is rapidly developing a sense of being a separate, independent person with personal rights, preferences, and ploys," she writes. "His 'willfulness' is a sign that he is growing up and that he feels secure enough at present to try to manage things for himself." "Open negativism toward his parents is a toddler's way of expressing his need for independence," Brazelton writes in *Toddlers and Parents* in nearly identical words. "With his 'no' he establishes himself as separate from his parents. Every time he says 'no' or acts out a negative response to a demand from those around him, he is learning about himself as a separate individual."

This spin on the temper tantrum transmutes the young child—still only at the early stages of the civilizing process, when raw impulses are under only intermittent control—into a pint-sized Minuteman, just looking after his independence and rights. This is an incomparable act of revisionism; the little dictator has been mythologized into a heroic revolutionary, the Declaration of Independence in hand.

True, no one suggests indulging the tantrum. Experts judiciously recommend a wait-out-the-storm response, nicely balancing the tension between suppressing the child's egotism and accepting his self-assertion. But a dangerous note of admiration creeps in. "Toddlers who have a lot of tantrums," Leach assures us, "are usually lively children who may be highly intelligent. They know what they want to do; they want to do a great many things, and they mind a great deal when someone or something prevents them."

From a less-known but similarly optimistic work, *The Emotional Life of the Toddler*, parents learn that the tantrum is a "wonderfully eloquent if seldom appreciated expression of the toddler's inner experience," whose underlying theme is, "No, I am not your clone, and I will not relinquish my sense of myself to do what you want

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me to do and be who you want me to be." Who could resist admiring the clear-eyed self-confidence of such a rebel?

Ignoring the reality of the temper tantrum in this fashion does not reflect an isolated lapse in psychological judgment. The truth is, much as you might read about antisocial behavior in the newspaper, it seldom makes an appearance in the literature of child psychology. The experts are in denial. Yes, they occasionally give us a glimpse of aggression or envy, but these do not appear as the stubborn urges that throughout human history have necessitated moral codes and laws (not to mention police). Rather, they are "stages," that is, passing moods to be passively endured instead of actively tamed. Historian Peter Stearns nicely captures this evasion when he points out that while Victorian and early twentieth-century child-rearing books addressed children's cruelty *toward* animals, more recent manuals tend to fret over their fear *of* them.

If not aggression and appetite, what impulses *are* part of the child's natural endowment, according to modern experts? Their most usual answer: empathy. The naturalness of empathy, an old philosophical notion popularized by the eighteenth-century Earl of Shaftesbury, is an idea worth taking seriously. Academic experts, in particular, correctly point to the many examples of what appears to be the spontaneous empathy of children familiar to parents: the 18-month-old who brings his mother to comfort a crying playmate, the three-year-old whose eyes fill with tears at the sight of an injured dog. But our pastoralists turn a grain of truth into a universe of wishful thinking. They go much further than concluding that human beings are naturally empathic in the way that they are, say, naturally fearful or naturally curious. They see empathy as the principal engine of moral life. This overestimation is no mere academic error. For by overstating the naturalness and power of empathy, they shift the foundation of morality away from self-control and toward self-expression.

According to a central strand of current thinking, empathy is such a basic human instinct that it makes its first appearance in the hospital nursery along with the sucking and startle reflexes. When newborns fuss at the sound of another baby's cry, according to William Damon, a professor at Brown University and author of *The Moral Child: Nurturing Children's Natural Moral Growth*, they are demonstrating the "spontaneous tendency to identify with another's discomfort. . . . Here we see, in the primitive world of the crib, one human sharing another's burdens." For the older child, empathy is automatic or "largely involuntary if one pays attention to the victim," according to Martin Hoffman, a professor at New York University and one of the foremost experts in the field of moral development. The parents' role is simply to draw the child's attention to the pain of others. When they do so, the child experiences guilt, which Hoffman calls "empathic distress." The older children grow, the more cognitive sophistication they can bring to their understanding of others' pain, and the less they need adults to point out others' suffering. According to Hoffman, this natural moral development explains the tendency of adolescents to identify with the plight of distant, oppressed peoples.

Questions leap to the mind of any parent. If empathy is so powerful, why do well-socialized

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children feel so little of it when it comes to the wailing sister whose doll they have just beheaded? And why are well-nurtured teenagers so lacking in this natural feeling when it comes to the suffering that their flagrant rudeness causes their parents? One would assume that we would extend empathy most readily to those we love, yet the truth known to all experienced in family life is often otherwise. Empathy theorists have nothing to say about psychic conflict, ambivalence, or the child's taste for cruelty (unless it is caused by profound neglect or abuse); they have rejected the universal model of morality as self-restraint. In their view, children do good because they have no strong desire to do anything else.

To their credit, empathy theorists have not shied away from talking about guilt, a subject many academic psychologists have shunned in recent decades. Indeed, the fact that today's experts give the impulse credit at all appears to mark an important cultural shift. For many decades psychologists have yearned to banish guilt as an exacting, soul-killing, almost Victorian imposition of duty and sexual repression. Though for Freud guilt was so central to good behavior that it had its own throne in the superego, from where it pronounced sentence over all thoughts and deeds, by mid-century psychologists began to attack this traditionally understood mechanism of self-restraint. It was a source of neurosis, they argued, of pleasure-denying inhibition and low self-confidence. Fear, self-contempt, anxiety: these were not emotions suitable to a newly affluent, pleasure-seeking age, and guilt fell into disrepute among the learned.

In order for guilt to be revived as a useful emotion, as is happening among some academics today, it had to undergo a stylish makeover from its prim past. Distinguished from both Freud's neurosis factory and the more generalized old-fashioned call of duty, it has been resurrected as, in Hoffman's words, "a true interpersonal guilt—the bad feeling one has about oneself because one is aware of harming someone." In this benign retelling of its origins, guilt is drained of hot, red-faced shame, and the guilty individual is transformed from the hero of a Greek tragedy to the heroine of a sentimental novel. Now doing right requires no self-denial; when we do good we are merely expressing ourselves. Closely allied with sympathy and imagination, the child's guilt (the result of projecting himself into the painful experience of another) confirms not his immoral longings but his noble and fine nature.

Newborns whose screams offer proof of human compassion, toddlers whose tantrums are demands for self-determination, schoolchildren whose guilty looks are evidence of natural empathy: it is easy enough to criticize the benign optimism of the American Child Pastoral. But surveys suggest that American parents go along with at least the general tenor of these ideas. According to researchers Sigurdur Gretarsson and Donna Gelfand, they tend to see friendliness and generosity as innate to their children's disposition; undesirable behavior like rudeness or irritability, on the other hand, they view as "transitory and extrinsically caused."

Now doing right requires no self-denial; when we do good we are merely expressing ourselves.

Worse, the myth of the American Child Pastoral hints to parents that moral instruction can actually harm their children. For behind the myth lies a powerful set of assumptions about personal identity shared by many Americans: each individual possesses a unique and worthy inner core, an essential "authentic" identity that must have ample opportunity to express its being. This idea of an authentic self goes much further than more traditional forms of individualism, which celebrate self-determination of beliefs, opinions, and life choices. It insists on a far more expansive expressive freedom: I must be allowed to speak out or act not because I must discover for myself what's true or right but

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because it expresses my feelings, the "real" me. Self-restraint—that is, the civilizing process itself—runs the risk of inhibiting, or "disrespecting," this authentic self.

This exaggerated respect for the authentic self places our experts in a bind when it comes to advice about how to teach manners. Children everywhere learn manners very early in their development, for manners offer the particular habitual forms of behavior that promote harmonious social life. But American experts are grudging, almost tongue-tied, on this subject. After all, manners often require individuals to restrain their personal inclinations; they are necessarily formulaic and often insincere—the very opposite of true expressions of feeling. Spock tries to bypass the problem this poses for the authentic self by proffering the following sunny advice: "Teaching children to say 'Please' or 'Thank you' is really not the first step. The most important thing is to have them like people." Note the good doctor's serious misdiagnosis. The purpose of saying please and thank you is not, in fact, to confirm our friendly feelings; it is to acknowledge the efforts others make on our behalf in a ritualized form, precisely so that we do not depend on the vagaries of feeling.

Spock completely recasts the goal of manners from reining in egotism to venting it. To him, far more important than how children behave is what they *are*. In a similar vein, the authors of *What to Expect: The Toddler Years* warn us, "Children who are nagged about their manners or are punished for not saying 'thank you' or for not using a fork . . . won't feel positive about manners and are likely to ignore them completely whenever they are out from under the eye of the enforcing parent." At any rate, not to worry. According to Spock, "Good manners come naturally"—thus making the reader suspect that the world's premier pediatrician has *never, ever spent a day with a child.*

So our experts transform parents from authorities who teach—sometimes sternly—the renunciations and manners that make social life possible into facilitators, cheerfully escorting the child's own unique self into maturity. At its most extreme, authenticity makes parental authority entirely unnecessary. "I never use the expression 'motivate a child,'" asserts one expert in a "Parent and Child" column in the *New York Times*. "All we can do is influence how they motivate themselves." In the same spirit, Penelope Leach writes, "There is no virtue in facing children with absolute 'dos' and 'don'ts,'" adding, with no comprehension of her illogic, "Rules are very useful in keeping a small child safe. But they really don't play much part in teaching him how to behave." Leach, who likes to put the word *discipline* in quotation marks, sees every parent as a potential martinet: "A gradual and gentle exposing of the child to the results of his own ill-advised actions is the only ultimate sanction you need. Any other kind of punishment is revenge and power-mongering." The authors of another aptly titled advice book, *Your Child Is Smarter Than You Think*, show a similar abhorrence of parental authority: "Simply telling your child not to do something—'Don't do that'—often said in an understandably exasperated tone of voice, is the least effective way of helping your child learn and understand self-control. It's an overt power play."

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True, a suspicion of authority is central to the American outlook. And certainly, many of our experts' suggestions—such as giving children reasons for rules or allowing small negotiations over them—when done in moderation with older children are fine means of promoting independent minds capable of carrying on that tradition. But what was once a healthy wariness about raw power has hardened into a debilitating taboo familiar to many middle-class American parents. Experts reveal it in the way they advise parents, particularly those with toddlers, to engage in almost any charade to hide the fact that they are in charge: bargaining, just-a-few-minutes-more negotiating, bribing. Leach tells parents of toddlers that they will need not only patience and good humor but "talent as an actor too. Are you in a hurry to get home? If you swoop the toddler into his stroller when he wanted to walk, all hell will break loose. Act as if you had all the time in the world, offer to be a horse and pull him home, and you will get there as fast as your legs will take the two of you." If your child refuses to get out of the stroller, counsel the authors of *What to Expect*, "Suggest, perhaps, that the dog get in the stroller or pretend to get in it yourself. . . . Give orders pretending you're a dog or a lion, Big Bird, Mickey Mouse." Anything but a parent.

A new crop of child-rearing books, supposedly more realistic about children's need for unambiguous guidance, does more to reveal the powerful hold of the American Child Pastoral than to offer a new vision. Robert Coles's latest, best-selling *The Moral Intelligence of Children*, for instance, asserts that parents and teachers are not offering enough moral instruction. But this claim is at odds with his real conclusions, as revealed in his title: that children are naturally moral—no, better than that, "morally intelligent." Coles ponders children's observations as if they were the pearls of Zen masters. He evokes "the stillness of bodies, the rapt attention," and the children's "moral vitality" during his classroom discussions with them. A treasured anecdote, repeated in several interviews, demonstrates the wisdom of his injured nine-year-old son, who—imagine the empathy!—tells his dad to slow down while racing to the hospital because he might cause an accident. "My son had become my moral instructor," Coles marvels.

This ambivalence—between advocating a strong role for parents in shaping children and trusting overmuch in children's innate gifts—runs throughout American advice literature. On the one hand, experts dislike uncivil behavior and offer some useful advice about managing children. Coles and Brazelton, for instance, both counsel that responding to every infant demand runs the risk of turning them into tyrants. But by getting all misty about children's natural morality, independence, and authenticity, they undermine their point.

Experts cannot imagine how adults induct children into the man-made world of morals and manners.

Their solution to this ambivalence is to reduce discipline to "setting limits." They ignore the important distinction between setting limits and defining moral norms. Parents setting limits are only placing boundaries on the child's self-expression. Parents defining moral norms—both negative norms of what you don't do and positive ones of what you should do—are teaching right and wrong. They are passing on a rich inheritance of principles and rituals that the child does not possess by nature and can only acquire from his culture, primarily through the teachings of his parents.

Experts have little advice to offer parents about this positive side of the task of raising children. They cannot imagine how adults induct children into the man-made world of morals and manners. In their mythology, our wunderkinder construct their own moral identity with a minimum of parental or social interference. Instead of developing a superego to represent society's interdictions in the mind, these kids need only empathy and its

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sister, guilt, both of them natural parts of the self. They do not need to learn the expectations of others and the forms for satisfying them; they need to learn only themselves. And so, in the guise of science, experts unwittingly advance a radical individualism. Rather than a recipe for a democratic personality that delicately balances personal ambition and public obligation, they have concocted a formula for egotists inept at forming attachments or seeing themselves as part of a larger whole. This is precisely the sort of egotism that Tocqueville viewed as latent in American life, an egotism that "saps the virtues of public life" and that produces "people . . . far too much disposed to think exclusively of their own interests, to become self-seekers practicing a narrow individualism and caring nothing for the public good."

The best illustration of this failure of moral understanding can be found in the works of our two most important theorists of moral development, Lawrence Kohlberg and Carol Gilligan, whose distrust of moral authority—parental or otherwise—knows no bounds. Kohlberg, a professor of psychology at Harvard until his death in 1987 and a touchstone thinker for child developmentalists for over 20 years, believed that moral development progresses through six stages. In the lower stages, common to all children, moral reasoning is based on authority and convention. At the higher stages, the individual reasons not according to local and subjective concerns but by appealing to abstract principles. For instance, my daughter was at the lowly stage two when someone asked her at age five why she shouldn't take a piece of candy from the corner store, and she answered, "Because I might get into trouble." Unlike the older stage-five or -six adolescent, who can argue from more general principles of fairness, her naive mind could conceive of right and wrong only through their personification in authority.

Kohlberg's claim that good behavior is a result of mature reasoning never found much proof in the real world; one study of incarcerated juveniles, for instance, found that these malefactors could reason abstractly quite as well as a control group of their law-abiding peers. But his theory had the virtue of confirming several bedrock principles of the American Child Pastoral. For one thing, the Kohlbergian child does not appear to have any unruly impulses to control. Further, Kohlberg was not in the least interested in the way morality might reveal itself in particular forms of manners, rules of etiquette, or dos and don'ts. And last, adults have only a walk-on role in shaping children's moral life. As he wrote in the essay "The Young Child As Philosopher" (grandfather of *The Moral Child* and *The Moral Intelligence of Children*), "Children think for themselves. The basic ideas of children do not come directly from adults or other children and will be maintained in spite of adult teaching." Children learn to reason in accordance with a pre-wired biological schedule. The most we can do is nudge them into the next stage.

No one goes further than Kohlberg in rejecting traditional moral education. Believing that only mature reasoning would lead the individual to an acceptance of "justice, rights, and the Golden Rule," he derided any attempt to introduce children to particular goods, famously dubbing it the "bag of virtues" approach. The whole moral inheritance of social norms and religious codes

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has nothing to offer the growing child; to the contrary, they run the risk of stifling his moral autonomy. Asked by parents and teachers why so many of his recommended lessons seemed to lead to the conclusion that children should resist authority, he scoffed, "Such teachers do not believe moral behavior should be based on reasoning. Rather, it should be based on the adult's preaching and on stories and situations that affirm the child's faith in the adult's authority." Like the democratic toddler we saw earlier, the healthy individual is the one who does not submit readily to his parents or rules. To become moral, the child has only to retreat in solitary meditation to the private monastery of his mind.

But Kohlberg did not see how completely his own individualistic moral system, which culminated in what he considered nature's law, was in fact the product of inherited prejudices rather than abstract reasoning. As one anthropologist objected, Kohlberg believed ethical maturity would necessarily lead one to oppose "capital punishment, hierarchy, tribalism, and divine authority." We should have known: nature's highest moral achievement is a Harvard professor.

Kohlberg's student, Carol Gilligan, is commonly understood to have moderated her teacher's celebration of autonomy, but in reality she has taken his ideas about a naturally self-generated morality to a new extreme. Her revolutionary first book, *In a Different Voice*, was a milestone of feminist thought both inside and outside the academy, influencing everyone from ed-school faculty to management consultants. Gilligan argued that Kohlberg and other theorists of moral development had told the story only from a man's point of view, as an ascent toward greater personal autonomy and mastery of abstract rules of justice. From this vantage point, women, who tend to be more embedded in relationships and to look for meaning in concrete situations, inevitably appeared deviant or immature. Gilligan made a plea for a distinctive feminine moral sense, what she called an "ethic of care," to supplement the already deified male "ethic of justice."

Gilligan's fame intensified to stardom—in 1996 *Time* pronounced her one of the 25 most influential Americans—when in her later books she advanced a notion that has now become conventional wisdom: that girls, as they enter adolescence, suffer a loss of self-esteem. Her account of how this happens is a remarkable instance of the American Child Pastoral.

Her moral biography of girlhood reads like this: Until preadolescence a young girl's relationships, the central arena of her moral development, are guileless and open, or, as Gilligan says, "genuine." She knows what she wants from others and asks for it without fuss. Even her conflicts smell sweet. Once she has "judge[d] which disagreements are worth having," says Gilligan, she enters into them with clarity and good sense. Girls of this age, with their "rich emotional lives," are perfectly authentic creatures; they "speak of their thoughts and feelings about relationships in direct ways." This authenticity leads them to "wisdom and generosity" and, in the words of a colleague Gilligan quotes approvingly, "a profound sense of morality." These untainted beings are not just morally intelligent—they're geniuses.

Girls fall under "the tyranny of the nice and the kind," as Gilligan labels their moral education.

But then shades of the prison house begin to close about the growing girl. They "approach the wall of shoulds"; they are forced to endure "psychological foot-binding," as their spirits are crushed by the exacting requirements of the world around them. They fall under "the tyranny of the nice and the kind," as Gilligan labels their moral education. "'Nice' girls are always calm, controlled, quiet," she writes. "They never cause a ruckus; they are never noisy, bossy, or aggressive; they are not anxious; they do not cause trouble." Though the viciously cliquish Laurel School in Cleveland—where her 1992

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book, *Meeting at the Crossroads* (written with Lyn Mikel Brown), was researched—often resembles an all-girl revue of *Lord of the Flies*, Gilligan is convinced that these girls have undergone not too little of the civilizing process but too much. By forbidding the easy-going, naturally occurring conflicts of girls' early years and thereby suppressing their authenticity, she argues, adults poison their organic relationships. The once lively, honest girls lose their "voice" and succumb to doubt, self-abnegation, and "silence."

Like her teacher, Gilligan goes to the limit in her dismissal of socializing authority. For her, what has universally been recognized as the work of civilization—the growing child's gains in self-control, her increasing civility—is "tyranny." In *Meeting at the Crossroads*, an 11-year-old recalls that when she was younger, "I had more fights or arguments." But now she has learned that "I'm not always right; [my friends] could have been just as right, and they have their thoughts too." Some might find this touching evidence of nascent maturity, but not Gilligan. She frets that the girl "has to suspend what she really feels . . . which, in effect, removes her from genuine relationship." She makes a similar judgment about Lauren, whose mother has encouraged her to "think before she speaks or acts." Lauren tells how she thinks back to her mother's advice and agrees to share the computer with a classmate instead of fighting over it. Gilligan can only worry about "what Lauren gives up by playing by these rules." At ten, Noura no longer wants "to fight over the stupid little things" with her brother, Gilligan reports. According to this vulgar Wordsworth of the girls' school, "Noura is beginning, it seems, to disconnect from her feelings and knowledge in an attempt to connect to what others want."

It is the rebellious younger girls who "refuse to take no for an answer" who earn Gilligan's respect. When Lauren, who ponders resisting "a really dumb" school assignment, gives in and does her homework, Gilligan haughtily registers her disapproval. "No one," she remarks, "seems to notice that Lauren doesn't say what she wants." On the other hand, Karin, who stalks out of class because her teacher fails to call on her, gets credit for "blow[ing] the whistle on relational violations." "The capacity for these eight-year-olds to be openly angry—to be 'really mad'—to be disruptive and resistant," she enthuses, "gives them an air of unedited authority and authenticity." Girls who resist doing their homework, who argue with their teachers, who rebel against their mothers, who fight with their friends: this is moral health as envisioned by one of America's premier psychologists.

The myth leads to nonsensical conclusions: that we can live in society but be completely self-made, that we can have relationships without obligations.

What's especially unsettling about all this is that Gilligan has been hailed as our great philosopher of interconnectedness, the corrector of our American (and putatively male) infatuation with autonomy. The truth is, Gilligan is even *more* radical than her peers when it comes to authentic individualism. She disdains the very idea of self-control and seeks to remove girls from this universally recognized requirement of civilization. And while she celebrates "relationships," she has no patience whatever with the demands for mutual accommodation and forbearance they inevitably make on us.

Gilligan's more general—and depressingly familiar—failure is that she cannot evoke for her readers the adult's role in introducing children to their basic obligations. Like her fellow child experts, she promotes the myth of an autonomous child-artist who can design his own moral picture. The danger, as we are discovering, is that the picture will be an ugly one. At the very least, the myth leads to nonsensical conclusions: that we can live in society but be completely self-made, that we can be attached but unencumbered, that we can have relationships without obligations.

No country can be that free. •

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Let's Stop Being Nutty About the Mentally Ill

E. Fuller Torrey

We emptied out our psychiatric hospitals with dismal results for their patients and for the quality of life in our cities. Here are some sane prescriptions for repairing the damage.

The emptying of our public psychiatric hospitals has been the second-largest social experiment in twentieth-century America, exceeded only by the New Deal. The experiment, undertaken upon remarkably little data and a multitude of flawed assumptions, has received virtually no formal evaluation or assessment to ascertain whether it has worked. Once the spring of deinstitutionalization was wound, it just kept going and going and going. And it continues today—disastrously.

It is important to realize the magnitude of this experiment. In 1955 state psychiatric hospitals housed 558,239 seriously mentally ill persons. If the same proportion of Americans were hospitalized today, when the U.S. population is much larger, these hospitals would contain some 900,000 seriously mentally ill individuals. In fact the actual number is less than 70,000, meaning that the net deinstitutionalization amounts to some 830,000 people—more than the population of Boston, Baltimore, or San Francisco.

Some of those who were released fared better than in the state hospitals of the 1940s and early 1950s: most of these institutions were little more than human warehouses. Researchers had yet to develop antipsychotic and antidepressant drugs, and the hospitals had virtually nothing to offer patients except custodial care. That has changed dramatically in the intervening four decades. We now have an armamentarium of effective psychiatric drugs, and many state psychiatric hospitals have improved markedly. A few, such as the exemplary New Hampshire State Hospital in Concord, provide better care than most private psychiatric hospitals.

Many who were deinstitutionalized, however, are worse off than if they had remained in the hospital. They can be found talking to themselves in public streets and parks, living in cardboard boxes or subway tunnels beneath the city in the middle of winter, or escaping the cold in public libraries. They often end up victimized or in jail, charged with misdemeanors. Hundreds of thousands of the deinstitutionalized mentally ill have died prematurely from accidents, suicide, or untreated illnesses. All too frequently, the consequences of this failed social experiment have been tragic and fatal.

New York State is a typical example of deinstitutionalization, with a net effective deinstitutionalization rate of some 90 percent of all

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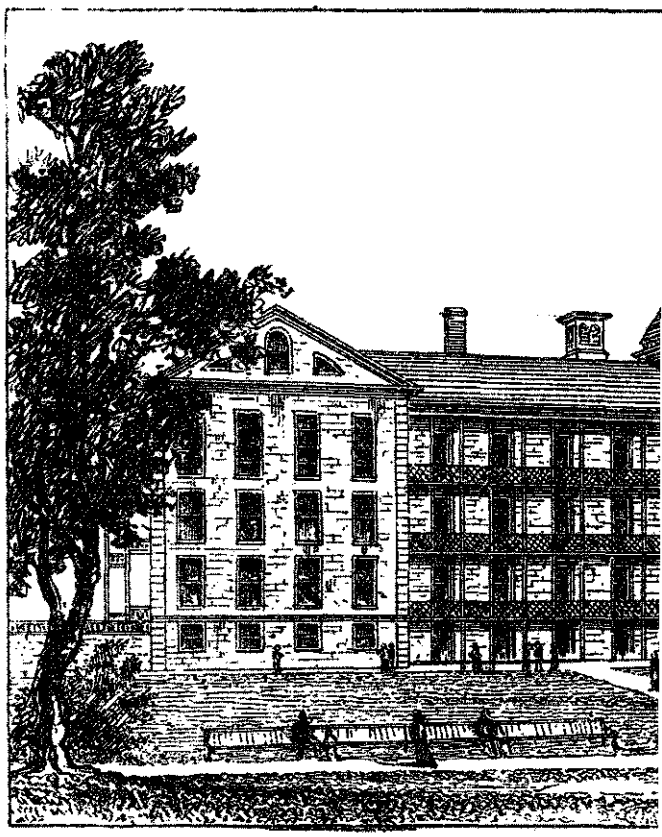
patients. Twenty-nine states have deinstitutionalized a higher percentage, led by Rhode Island with a rate of almost 99 percent. Dr. Seymour Kaplan, one of the pioneers of deinstitutionalization in New York State, later considered it the gravest error he had ever made.

From the earliest days of deinstitutionalization it was clear that many persons discharged from New York's psychiatric hospitals were living marginal lives at best. A 1974 study found that one-quarter of the those living in New York City's welfare hotels had once resided in psychiatric hospitals. By 1979 shocking newspaper articles had grown common. One typical story, headlined "21 Ex-Mental Patients Taken from 4 Private Homes," described the former patients as living in Queens "amid broken plumbing, rotting food, and roaches." The article further reported: "Last May the police found the decaying corpse of a former patient lying undisturbed in one home inhabited by six other residents."

New York State also provides abundant examples of the failures of deinstitutionalization, as measured by the number of mentally ill individuals who are homeless or in jail, the number of violent acts by mentally ill persons who are not receiving treatment, and the overall quality of life in the community.

A 1985 front-page story on the homeless in the *New York Times* featured a photo of a man named Vito, "who wears a suit and lives in a coffinlike cardboard box." It also described Antoine, who lived beneath FDR Drive, where he was training "for the rigors of a mission to outer space," and a homeless man who lived near the World Trade Center "because he believed it would be a good place to take off for outer space." As recently as 1995 a New York study reported that 38 percent of discharged psychiatric patients "have no known address within six months of their release."

Perhaps the ultimate symbol of the relationship between psychiatric hospitalization and homelessness in New York is the Keener Men's Shelter on Ward's Island. For three-quarters of a century the



building was part of Manhattan State Hospital, serving individuals with severe psychiatric disorders. In 1981, as the state emptied the hospital under the banner of deinstitutionalization, the building became a men's public shelter. When I last visited the shelter in 1990, it housed 800 homeless men. Approximately 40 percent of them were severely mentally ill; several had once been hospital patients in the same building. Despite humane management by the Volunteers of America, the Keener shelter is merely a shelter and is neither staffed nor funded to provide the intensive psychiatric care that many of its residents need, including medication maintenance, vocational rehabilitation, social reeducation, and the transition to supported housing of their own or supervised group homes.

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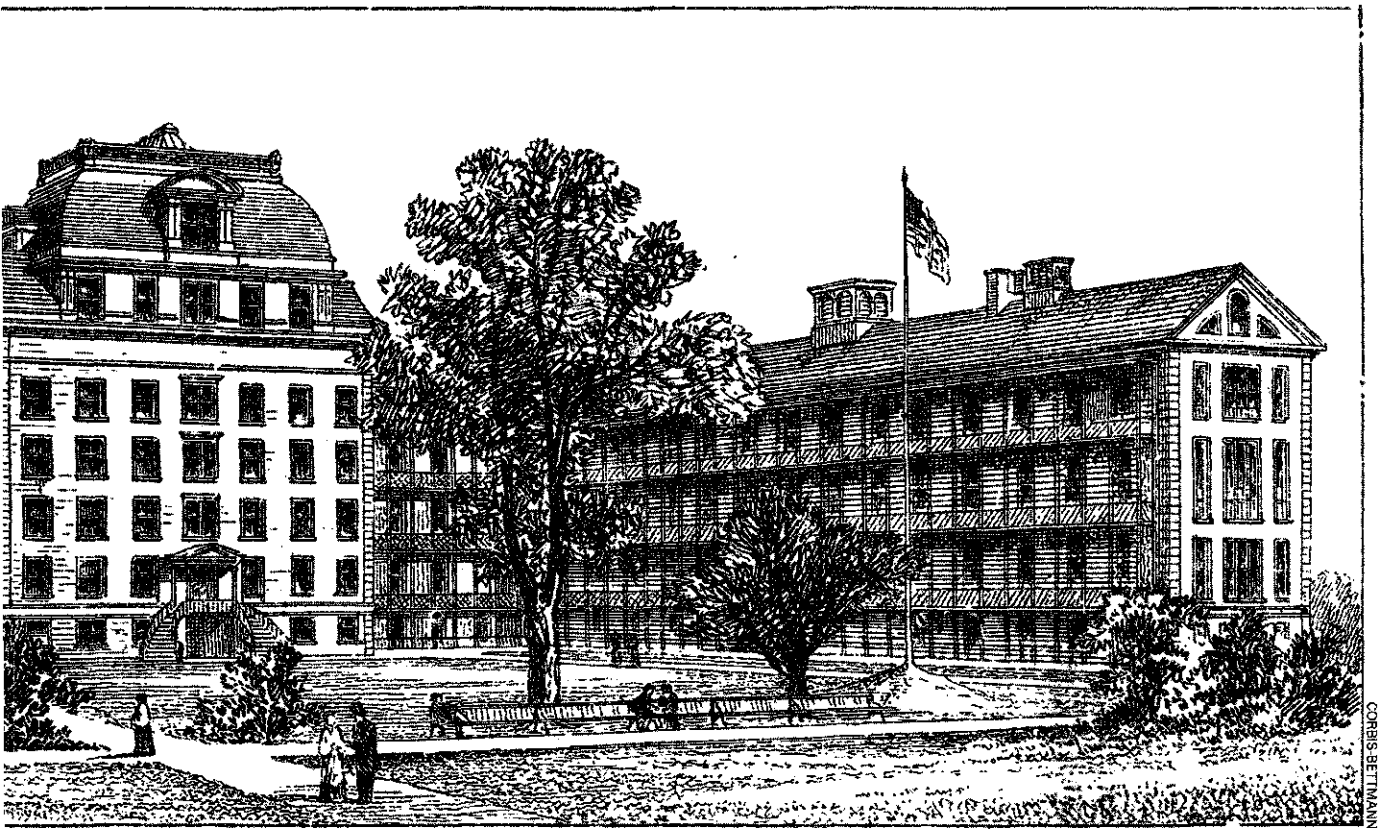

CORBIS-BETTMANN

BELLEVUE HOSPITAL.

Another disturbing legacy of deinstitutionalization is the large number of the mentally ill in New York's jails and prisons. In 1987, Dr. Henry Steadman and his colleagues published the results of interviews with 3,332 state prison inmates and reported that 8 percent of them had "very substantial psychiatric and functional disabilities that clearly would warrant some type of mental health service." The consequences of jailing such people are often fatal. A study of inmates who committed suicide in New York State jails between 1977 and 1982 found that half of them had been previously hospitalized for a mental disorder.

Most of the mentally ill who end up in jail have committed misdemeanors like disorderly conduct or trespassing. For many of those charged with more serious crimes, there is a direct, and usually obvious, connection between their condition and their crime. For example, in Rochester a mentally ill man robbed a bank using his pointed finger in his pocket as a "gun," then took the money to the zoo and threw it into the enclosure for seals, "urging the animals to return home," according to a New York Correctional Association report. The report concluded that such acts were "more [the] pathetic expressions of mental illness than deliberate, premeditated crimes."

A small number of untreated mentally ill individuals, however, do commit serious crimes, including murder. Almost invariably, they are not

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receiving medication for their illness at the time of the crime. The incidence of such violent acts has grown in tandem with the number of untreated mentally ill individuals.

In New York such crimes have become a continuing commentary on the perversity of deinstitutionalization. Mary Ventura, three weeks after being discharged from a psychiatric hospital, pushed a woman she did not know into the path of a subway train. Reuben Harris, with 12 previous psychiatric hospitalizations, pushed another woman to her death in the same manner. Juan Gonzalez, who had been psychiatrically evaluated four days earlier, killed two and injured nine others on the Staten Island Ferry. Kevin McKiever, well known to the city's psychiatric services, stabbed to death a woman who was walking her dogs in Central Park. Christopher Battiste, psychiatrically treated at city hospitals twice in the previous two months, bludgeoned to death an 80-year-old woman on the steps of a church. Jorge Delgado, previously hospitalized seven times for his paranoid schizophrenia, ran naked into St. Patrick's Cathedral and killed an elderly usher. Dennis Sweeney, Lois Lang, Van Hull, Michael Vernon, Steve Smith, Da Pei Wu, Tatiana Belopolsky . . . the tragic litany continues year after year. There are an estimated 1,000 such homicides in the United States per year—4 to 5 percent of all homicides. The common denominator is a severely delusional mentally ill person not receiving treatment.

"The fear is that from out of the chaos some maniac will emerge to pointlessly, stupidly, inexplicably hurl you, blast you, cast you into oblivion."

Finally, of course, deinstitutionalization has caused the quality of life for everyone in the community to deteriorate. Violent acts like those I've mentioned contribute to this deterioration, as noted by a *New York Times* columnist in 1995 in response to the Reuben Harris case: "If you are a New Yorker the fear is there somewhere, maybe buried deep beneath the surface of consciousness, or maybe right out there in the open. . . . The fear is that from out of the chaos some maniac will emerge to pointlessly, stupidly, inexplicably hurl you, blast you, cast you into oblivion."

But it is not only episodes of violence that sap community life under deinstitutionalization. It is Joyce Brown, mentally ill and addicted to drugs, living on a steam grate at the corner of East 65th Street and Second Avenue, urinating on the sidewalk and defecating in the gutter as she hurls obscenities at passersby. It is Larry Hogue, the "wild man of West 96th Street," with manic-depressive illness and cocaine dependence, masturbating in front of children and threatening to eat the dog of one local resident. As a woman writing a letter in the *Wall Street Journal* in 1994 summarized it: "A simple visit to the local elementary school, post office or grocery store . . . can be a Dantean journey through the dark underside of our society."

It is important to realize that the original underpinning for deinstitutionalization was political correctness, not scientific knowledge. When deinstitutionalization shifted into high gear in the early 1960s, only one study had been done on the effects of moving severely mentally ill individuals from public psychiatric hospitals to community living. Published in England in 1960 by Dr. John Wing, the study found that 20 schizophrenic individuals, selected because they were functioning at a high level and were able to work, did relatively well when moved from a psychiatric hospital to supervised community living facilities. Virtually every American advocate for deinstitutionalization in the 1960s and 1970s cited this lone paper, despite the fact that the 20 patients studied were far from representative of the vast majority of patients who were sent packing.

The policy of deinstitutionalization was in fact based on ideology. In 1961 psychiatrist Thomas Szasz published *The Myth of Mental Illness*, alleging that there really was no such thing as schizophrenia or manic-depressive disorder. That same

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year sociologist Erving Goffman published *Asylums*, in which he asserted that most of the behavior psychiatric patients exhibited was a consequence of their being in the hospital, not of their illnesses. The following year Ken Kesey published *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*, which became an underground best-seller and further promoted the idea that most patients in state psychiatric hospitals were characters like Randle McMurphy, who had been hospitalized by mistake and who would function perfectly normally once released.

By the mid-1960s, then, it had become politically correct to denigrate psychiatric hospitals and assert that the patients would do just fine if moved to community settings. The ethos was similar to the British film *King of Hearts*, in which the inmates of the asylum are released en masse, take over the town, and live happily ever after. Civil libertarians and traditional liberals promoted this idea; fiscal conservatives, who saw deinstitutionalization as a way to save state funds by shutting down some of the hospitals, went along too.

In retrospect, it is easy to see the deeply flawed assumptions undergirding deinstitutionalization. One such assumption was that nothing much was wrong with patients in the psychiatric hospitals. At that time, the Freudian psychoanalytic theory prominent in American psychiatry held that bad mothering and social stresses by themselves could lead to disorders such as schizophrenia. Research in the past decade has shown this assumption to be false: studies using such techniques as magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and positron emission tomography (PET) scans have proved that schizophrenia and manic-depressive illness are physical disorders of the brain in exactly the same way as Parkinson's disease or multiple sclerosis. Patients with such illnesses need medications to control their symptoms; without the medications, their symptoms usually get worse.

The second flawed assumption was that mentally ill individuals discharged from the psychiatric hospitals would voluntarily seek psychiatric treatment if they needed it. Psychiatric professionals in the 1960s and 1970s pointed to the newly funded Community Mental Health Centers (CMHCs) as places where the mentally ill could go to get continuing treatment.

In reality, however, most CMHCs had no interest in treating the patients being released from public psychiatric hospitals. Their staff psychiatrists aspired to do counseling and psychotherapy for individuals with more ordinary problems, just like psychiatrists in the private sector. One federally funded CMHC in Wisconsin even made individuals with schizophrenia use a separate clinic door and waiting room so that they would not offend the "worried well" going there for psychotherapy appointments.

More seriously, however, approximately half the patients discharged from state psychiatric hospitals did not seek treatment once out of the hospital because they did not believe themselves to be ill. In psychiatric terms, they lacked insight into their condition. Recent studies have confirmed that approximately half of all individuals diagnosed with schizophrenia and manic-depressive disorder have significantly impaired insight into their condition. They believe that the Russian KGB really *is* following them, or that they really *did* write songs for the Beatles and are owed millions of dollars in royalties. The fact that they lack such self-awareness is not surprising, since as we now know, these illnesses often afflict the same parts of the brain that we use to think about ourselves and our needs.

In practical terms, this means that approximately half of those who suffer from schizophrenia and manic-depressive disorder will not seek treatment voluntarily no matter how attractive the treatment facilities might be. And since lawyers working for the American Civil Liberties Union and the Bazelon Center in Washington, D.C., have changed state laws to make it exceedingly difficult to treat the mentally ill involuntarily, roughly half of these individuals are untreated at any given time. They constitute most of the mentally ill population who are homeless or in jail, and who commit acts of violence.

Finally, advocates of deinstitutionalization wrongly assumed that the states would continue to take responsibility for treating mentally ill

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individuals after discharging them from public psychiatric hospitals. This was a reasonable assumption, since states had had virtually complete responsibility for treating these individuals since the early nineteenth century. For example, in 1963, when deinstitutionalization was getting under way, state and local government contributed 98 percent of the total cost for support and services for persons with mental illnesses, and the federal government contributed just 2 percent.

All that changed in the 1960s, when Washington made mentally ill individuals who had been discharged from state psychiatric hospitals eligible for a variety of federal programs. Funds from Medicaid, Medicare, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), the Disability Insurance Trust fund (SSDI), food stamps, and housing programs all became available to those with serious mental illnesses. States quickly learned how to shift the costs and the responsibility for providing public psychiatric services to the federal government, so that by 1994 the state and local share of total costs had decreased from 98 to 38 percent, while the federal share had increased from 2 to 62 percent. As the discharged psychiatric patients increasingly fell between the cracks in the treatment system, the states increasingly disavowed responsibility for them.

It is doubtful whether, in the history of American medicine and social services, a policy of this magnitude has ever been implemented with as little evaluation or follow-up.

Given the vast scale of deinstitutionalization, one might have thought that both the federal and state governments would have been interested in evaluating the process and assessing the outcome, especially since this social experiment had been launched with virtually no empirical base. Incredibly, this did not happen. As late as 1981, when deinstitutionalization had been under way for over 15 years, an academic review of research on the subject found only five studies concerned with outcomes, three of which it deemed methodologically flawed. During these same years, the National Institute of Mental Health evaluated the Community Mental Health Centers program and discovered that patients being released from state psychiatric hospitals were not, with only occasional exceptions, receiving aftercare from the CMHCs. In other words, during the mass exodus of patients from psychiatric hospitals, nobody bothered to ask what was happening to them. It is doubtful whether, in the history of American medicine and social services, a policy of this magnitude has ever been implemented with as little evaluation or follow-up.

Given the debacle of deinstitutionalization, what can be done to correct the situation? Two changes would be most helpful.

First, responsibility for mental illness services should be fixed at the state and local levels, and the states should then be held accountable. Human services is not a function that the federal government carries out well. Let states with populations of under 10 million take ultimate responsibility for providing public services for individuals with psychiatric disorders. In states with populations of over 10 million, including New York, counties should take ultimate responsibility, as has happened in California.

States and counties cannot assume responsibility, however, without the necessary fiscal resources. Accordingly, federal funds now being used for mental illness services, including federal Medicaid and Medicare funds, should be given to the states in block grants. In most states more money than is presently being spent is not needed; what is needed is flexibility to spend the funds in the most efficient manner to provide good services. Turning federal funds into block grants would make it possible for patient needs, rather than reimbursement regulations (as is unfortunately the case today), to be the main force shaping the mental illness treatment system.

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How would mental illness services change? States would doubtless discover that closing down all state hospital beds is ultimately not cost-effective and that a small percentage of seriously mentally ill persons need long-term inpatient care. The states would also discover that it costs less to maintain the mentally ill on medication—by making it a condition of their remaining at liberty—than to have them readmitted to the hospital every few months.

With responsibility should come accountability. State mental illness services should undergo an annual or biennial evaluation, funded by the federal government but carried out by a private contractor (RAND, say, or the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research). Federal agencies cannot carry out such evaluations effectively because they are too susceptible to congressional pressure, White House mandates, and political correctness. Measures would include quality-of-life ratings (both by the patients and by their families), program evaluations, and data on the number of patients who are employed, homeless, or in jail. The results of the state evaluation would partially determine the size of the next federal block grant, with states being penalized for doing poorly and rewarded for doing well.

A second key reform that would improve today's bad situation is more controversial: the mental health system must provide for the occasional involuntary treatment of seriously mentally ill individuals. Of the approximately half of all seriously mentally ill persons who have impaired insight into their own condition, a significant fraction will need such treatment once initial attempts to persuade them to accept help have failed.

Involuntary treatment requires a court order for commitment, either as an inpatient or outpatient, or for guardianship. Outpatient commitment, commonly used in 12 states, requires the person to continue taking medication if he wishes to stay out of the hospital and has proved especially effective in reducing rehospitalizations. Thanks no doubt to the power of its civil-liberties lobby, New York has been the only state with a statute specifically *prohibiting* the use of outpatient commitment, although legislators modified this law in 1995 to allow a pilot program for outpatient commitment at New York City's Bellevue Hospital.

The crux of any commitment law is the conditions it sets for involuntary commitment to be legal. In many states, posing a danger to oneself or others is the only grounds for commitment, and courts often interpret this provision very strictly. In order to treat seriously mentally ill individuals before they have proved dangerous, it is necessary to include "need for treatment" or "substantial deterioration" as criteria for involuntary treatment, and several states have moved in this direction. There should, of course, be provisions for court hearings and public defenders to ensure that involuntary treatment is not abused, as it was in the Soviet Union. But as columnist (and psychiatrist) Charles Krauthammer has noted, the use of dangerousness alone as the criterion for involuntary commitment "is not just unfeeling, it is uncivilized. The standard should not be dangerousness but helplessness. Society has an obligation to save people from degradation, not just death."

A major danger in thinking about the disaster of deinstitutionalization is the temptation to accept it. An entire generation of young adults has grown up seeing homeless mentally ill individuals living on the streets and in the parks. From their perspective, why shouldn't these people always live there? To them, the Joyce Browns and Larry Hogues of the world are simply part of the urban landscape, along with broken-down cars at the curbs and refuse under the bridges.

It is important for those of us who are older to speak out. We remember when homelessness was rare, confined to alcoholic hoboes. We must not accept the debacle of deinstitutionalization and the inevitability of its consequences. *We* made this problem, and we can correct it.

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Who Says the Homeless Should Work?

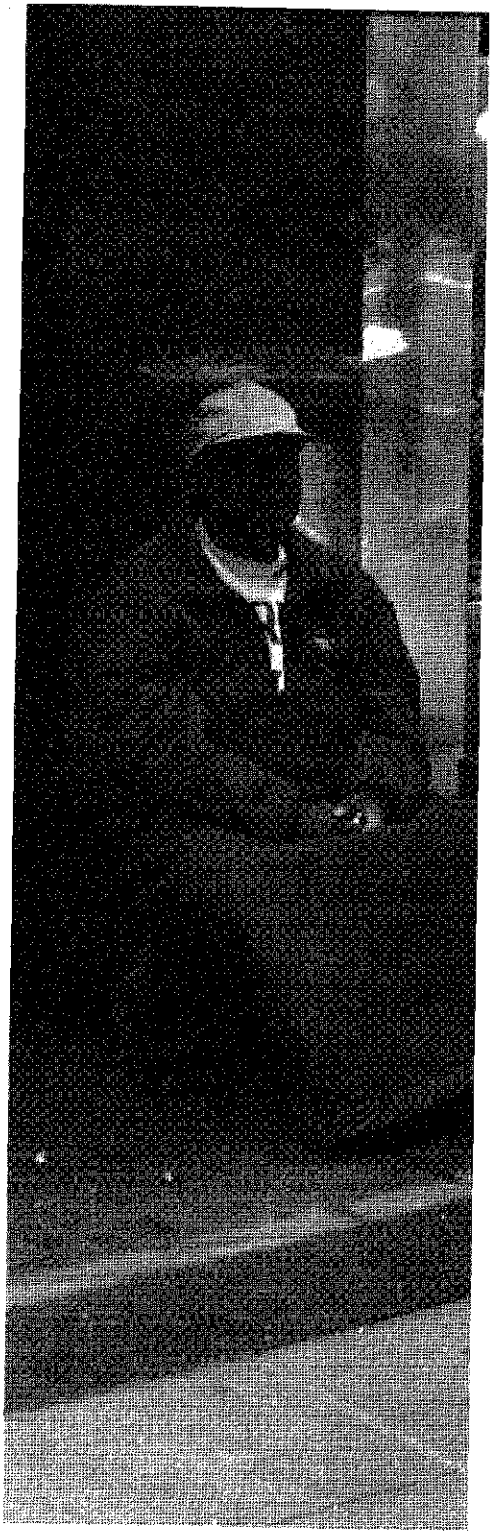
Sol Stern

The political arguments often get testy on New York 1's popular evening TV talk-fest, *The Road to City Hall*. But it's hard to remember anything quite like the recent confrontation between George McDonald and Steven Banks, two of the founding fathers of the city's homeless-rights movement. McDonald instantly went on the attack, accusing the city's oldest homeless-advocacy group, the Coalition for the Homeless, of trying to torpedo the work-training program that his own organization, the Doe Fund, runs for residents of the Harlem Men's Shelter. Banks, the Coalition's high-profile lawyer, countered that McDonald and the Doe Fund were exploiting the shelter residents by charging them $65 a week for rent. Dumbfounded by the charges and countercharges, the show's genial, ultraliberal host pleaded, "You're supposed to be on the same side. What's going on here?"

What's going on is a sea change in attitudes toward the homeless. The Coalition and other advocates remain wholly committed to the entitlement-oriented culture of the old shelter system, along with the belief that the cause of homelessness is a lack of affordable housing. But the Giuliani administration has other ideas. It has been contracting with tough-love programs like the Doe Fund to take over city homeless shelters, a new and, so far, quite successful approach that fundamentally challenges the old culture of dependency. Rejecting the Coalition's insistence that "housing, housing, housing" is the only solution for homelessness, George McDonald's program is based on the premise that the only real answer to the problem is work and personal responsibility. As McDonald recently told me, "My experience with homeless people has brought me to the conclusion that they are more capable of helping themselves than I thought, and than the advocates still think."

George McDonald now champions work and responsibility, not housing, as the cure for homelessness. This time he's right.

George McDonald's public challenge to the Coalition's entitlement philosophy and his unexpected emergence as an ally of the Giuliani administration



A Ready, Willing, & Able trainee.

Photographs by Leonard Freed

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represent a breathtaking 180-degree political turn. For no one, not even Steven Banks, has agitated more relentlessly in the trenches of the homeless-rights movement than he.

As a middle-class boy growing up in the quiet town of Spring Lake, New Jersey, in an area known as the Irish Riviera, McDonald had absorbed from the nuns who were his teachers an almost religious calling to help the poor. "They taught me," he recalls, "that other people's miseries are your miseries." In this spirit, in his mid-thirties, he abandoned a successful career as a sporting-goods-company executive for full-time social and political activism. A failed candidate during the 1980s in five races for Congress and one for City Council president, he ran each time on one main issue: homelessness. "In New York at the time," he says, "you could walk out of a restaurant after a $200 meal and have to step over a person on the street. The problem just stared you in the face."

By the mid-eighties McDonald had grown so obsessed with the homeless that he moved beyond mere advocacy into sharing his clients' lives. With his savings depleted and no steady source of income, he rented a six-by-nine-foot room in a single-room-occupancy hotel for $55 a week. As an unpaid volunteer for the Coalition for the Homeless, he spent most of his days and nights at Grand Central, feeding the homeless men and women camped out in the terminal's waiting rooms. Several times the Metro-North police arrested him for trespassing. He would also turn up at press conferences, looking shabby, to buttonhole reporters and politicians about the cause.

"I wanted to see what it was like to live in an SRO," McDonald says. "I had what I needed, and there were no distractions, and I was able to spend a lot of time getting the stories of the homeless out to the media. It also helped me, by immersion, figure out what the problem really consisted of. It was an incredibly liberating experience."

To the reporters covering the homeless beat, McDonald's views seemed no different from those of the Coalition's founder, Robert Hayes, who had brought the landmark 1979 *Callahan* v. *Carey* lawsuit against the city. The resulting consent decree called into being a vast, unprecedented gulag of drug- and crime-infested government shelters, at a per-person cost of more than $18,000 a year. Not that in the pre-*Callahan* days there was any shortage of places for people to go for basic sustenance: in addition to a few city-run shelters, there were voluntary agencies like the

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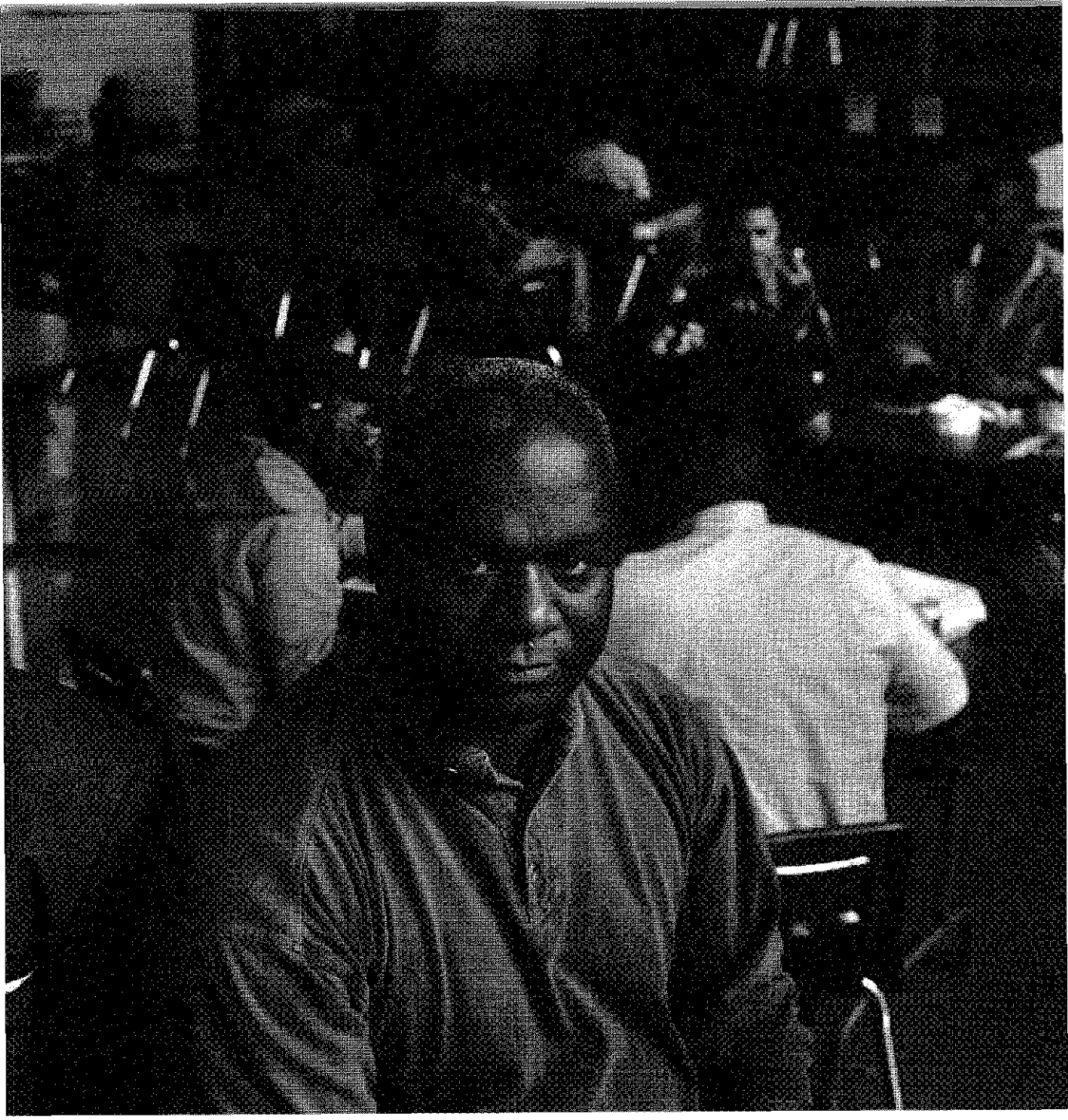

Formerly homeless, Mahmoud Rashid and Al Johnson now run the Harlem Men's Shelter.

Salvation Army, and as a last resort, the city's welfare agency provided vouchers for Bowery-style flophouses. To Hayes and his allies, however, this improvised social safety net was inadequate and too uncertain. The unfortunate should not have to rely on the goodwill of the community, they said. Instead, in the time-honored fashion of advocates in New York, they purported to find an unqualified "right to shelter" in the State Constitution, which they succeeded in persuading the courts to enforce.

The Koch administration accepted the consent decree because it believed that an activist judiciary would rule against the city anyway and because many officials were sympathetic to Hayes's argument. Koch's former welfare commissioner William Grinker recalls: "At the time

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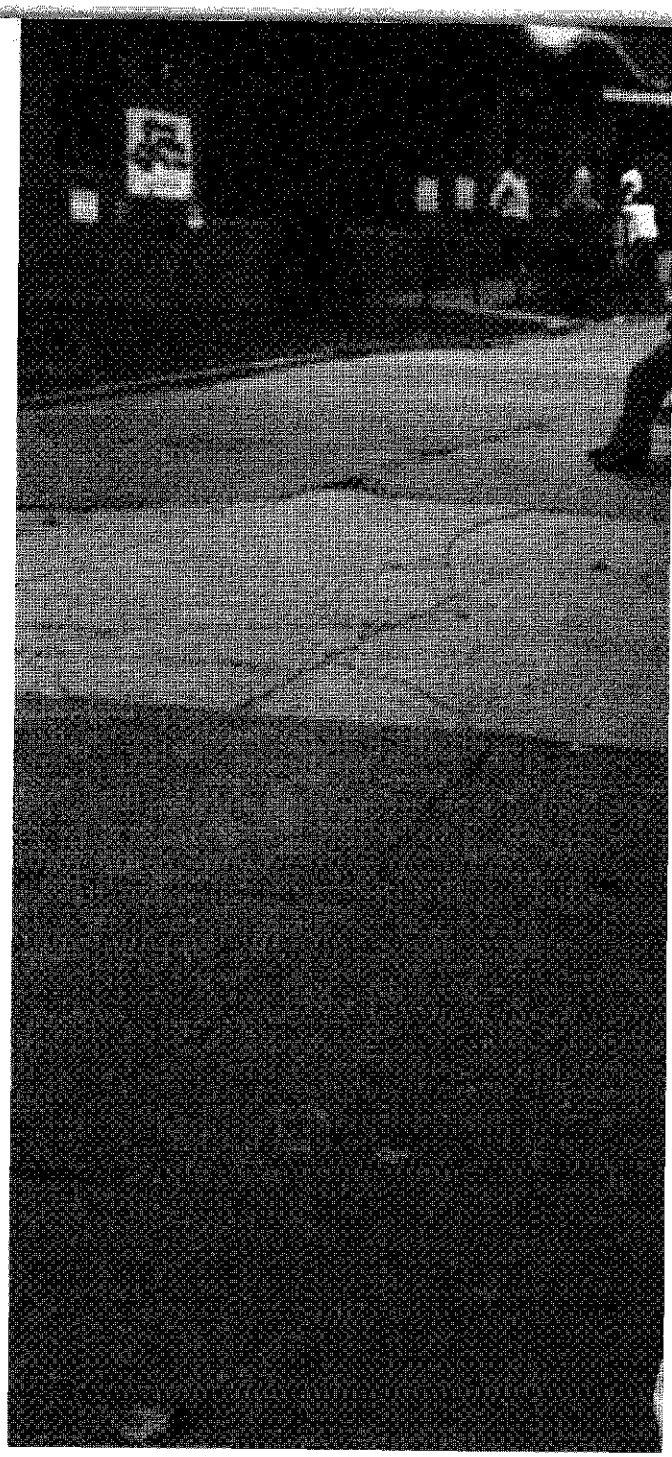

everyone in government thought that this was the right thing to do, that it was something that could be done. Only later was there this sense of, 'What did we get ourselves into?'" The estimated 2,000 single homeless individuals in New York when the consent decree was signed had grown by the mid-1980s to an average of 11,000 occupying city shelter beds on any given day, and as many as 40,000 who used the shelters at some time during the year.

Without a doubt, the consent decree created perverse incentives. Under it, the city couldn't test an applicant for drug or alcohol abuse or ask if he had any financial assets or alternative housing. "Once you make these kinds of guarantees and entitlements, people will use them," says Grinker. "And then it became an alternative living arrangement, even for some working people."

McDonald says that his own experiences in Grand Central made him realize that the remedies offered by the lawsuit were of little help to his homeless flock. "I never believed in the courts setting social policy on this issue," he insists. "I told Bob Hayes at the time that we had to have a political strategy that really did something for these people, that got them back on their feet and into the mainstream." After all, the Callahan for whom Hayes's famous lawsuit was named, an alcoholic who lived under an East River bridge, died on the streets despite Hayes's victory in court.

As one of the most active members of Mayor Dinkins's Commission on the Homeless, McDonald, along with commission chairman Andrew Cuomo, drafted its 1992 final report—the first official recognition that the policy of one-sided entitlements was a dismal failure. It acknowledged that most of the single adults in the shelters were not there for want of housing but because of drug addiction, mental illness, and other dysfunctional behavior. The report recommended that the city contract out management of its shelters to not-for-profit social service agencies and that a "balance of rights and responsibilities" be struck as part of a new "social contract" between the homeless and the city.

McDonald had learned the most important lesson of the streets and the shelters—that work and self-discipline, not whining about society's failings, were what these men needed most. "As a result of that experience, there definitely has been a shift in what I believe society has to do for a person, versus what that person has to do for himself," he says. "Now I know that if a guy gets a job, the housing pretty much can take care of itself."

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George McDonald and wife, Harriet, a former screenwriter who is now the Doe Fund's vice president.

McDonald contends—breaking once more with advocate orthodoxy—that New York, like the rest of America, offers his charges a sufficiency of jobs. "I believe that motivated people in the city of New York who are drug-free and reliable and show up every day for work can always find opportunity," McDonald told me. "Even with high unemployment rates and all the barriers our people have to overcome—prison records, substance-abuse episodes, and spotty employment histories—still they wind up with jobs, because they are so motivated."

But, as Steven Banks suggested on the New York 1 program, aren't these jobs of the "dead-end" variety, leading nowhere? The concept infuriates McDonald: "Going to work, even picking up leaves or sweeping the streets, anybody who says

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that's a dead end doesn't have any understanding of the difference between the work culture—the free-enterprise culture—and the welfare culture. I mean, drugs lead to nowhere—to the grave. Yet the attitude of the advocates is, well, the homeless person has a right to lie on the street. The person has a right, a right, a right. That's our basic philosophical difference."

In 1985, McDonald created the Doe Fund—named for a homeless "Jane Doe" who died that year—and he began, in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, a small voluntary shelter program for homeless men based on the concept of personal responsibility. It enforced strict rules of behavior and offered both a mandatory work program, called "Ready, Willing, & Able," and a serious job-search program. McDonald had contracted with the city's Housing Preservation and Development Department for the men in his program to do clean-up and small repairs in city-owned buildings. And when Andrew Cuomo joined the Clinton administration as an assistant secretary of Housing and Urban Development, McDonald received HUD grants for giving the homeless job training, along with recognition from Washington.

"I am not a victim of society. I just made some bad choices. But it's the nineties now, and I have my chances to do something for myself."

But when the new Giuliani administration faced its first budget crunch, McDonald found that the Doe Fund would lose almost a third of the $1.5 million it was receiving from city contracts. Instead of joining the long line of social service advocates at City Hall noisily protesting the "heartless" administration and its "devastating" budget cuts, he looked for a new market niche for his organization's services. As he observed the filthy condition of the streets and sidewalks near the fund's East 84th Street headquarters, a brainstorm came to him: why not have the men in the program clean the streets and then hope that the community would respond by helping to support that service? Soon crews from the Bedford-Stuyvesant shelter, dressed in neatly pressed blue jumpsuits, were sweeping up refuse along the Upper East Side's major arteries. Appreciative letters began arriving from local merchants and citizens, many with checks enclosed.

Two years ago the Giuliani administration began implementing the Cuomo Commission recommendations on turning over management of city shelters to not-for-profit organizations. In May 1996 it chose the Doe Fund to run the 200-bed Harlem Men's Shelter, next to the Harlem River on the site of the old Polo Grounds. In less than a year McDonald transformed the shelter. Once filthy, drug-infested, and hopeless, it is now clean, drug-free, and a beehive of activity. By seven o'clock each morning the building has emptied out, with almost all the men off to their job assignments.

The *Callahan* consent decree is irrelevant to this human recovery community. The only mandate that counts is the contract that each man signs upon entering, laying out his obligations. After being confined to the shelter for a 30-day orientation, during which he does odd jobs, gets a drug test, and sees both substance-abuse and job counselors, he goes to work full-time on one of the street-cleaning crews or a job assignment in city-owned buildings. If he successfully stays on this assignment during the 9 to 12 months it takes to complete the program, and if he remains drug-free, he is likely to end up with a job, an apartment or room, and $2,000 in the bank, saved up for him by the shelter out of the $5.50 to $7.00 an hour in wages he earns from his work assignment.

The culture of the shelter stresses getting residents ready to join the workforce. In the evenings employment counselors help with résumés, interview preparation, and additional training. "If residents learn to stay sober, arrive at work on time, and keep a good attendance record, we can find them jobs," says Sharonann Smith, the fund's professional job developer. "There are a lot of companies that will hire them—not out of charity but because they want reliable workers."

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Independent auditors confirm that over half the men who successfully complete the work program end up in regular paying jobs (most in the private sector) and in their own apartments. Graduates include an office assistant at K-III Communications Corporation, a $400-a-week cook at Beefsteak Charlie's, and a $14-an-hour construction worker at the Javits Convention Center. All this costs some $24,000 per resident per year, compared to the less than $20,000 the city spends in its own shelters. But the city pays the Doe Fund only $2.5 million per year, an average of about $13,000 per bed. McDonald's private fund-raising and his program's grants from the federal government make up the difference.

In my visits to the Harlem shelter, I met many men who had been hard-drug users living on the streets in truly desperate straits before they entered the program. Very few of them believed that they could make it back onto their feet without the program. One recent graduate, 47-year-old Luther Harrison, is now a security guard at the Simon & Schuster building in midtown. He told me that he makes about $350 per week, has held the job steadily for almost two years, and lives in a Brooklyn apartment that he shares with a roommate. Before he went into the Doe Fund program, he had been in and out of various shelters and had spent some time living on the streets. "I was drinking and drugging, and I didn't have any self-esteem," he told me. "Finally I got fed up with being homeless. Enough is enough."

I spoke to one Doe Fund worker who was cleaning up my street corner on the West Side, another neighborhood where McDonald's troops now work. A 31-year-old black man named Miles Burke, he had graduated from Thomas Jefferson High School in Brooklyn and then served in the army. After his discharge he got into drugs and crime and ended up serving four years on a felony conviction. After his release he was back on the streets and on drugs again. He spent some time in the shelters, and some in Central Park or on the subways, supporting himself by panhandling and shoplifting. With his life spinning out of control, he heard about the Doe Fund from a relative.

"I was tired," he told me. "I had enough of that kind of life." Now he was up every day at 5:30. By 7:30 he was on Amsterdam Avenue cleaning up and bagging garbage. Working until 3:30, he then headed back to the shelter for his computer classes and Narcotics Anonymous sessions. He was already sending out applications for civil service jobs and for public housing. "I can't be dependent on the Doe Fund," he said. "Eventually you have to leave the shelter and make it on your own. I am not a victim of society or anything like that. I just made some bad choices. But it's the nineties now, and I have my chances to do something for myself."

Out on the streets with the cleaning crews, you can feel the radical cultural impact the program makes. While Miles Burke cleans the street and bags garbage, other homeless men stand in front of stores and banks, shaking their Styrofoam cups and looking for a handout. It has been my impression, however—shared by local storekeepers—that there are fewer of them since the Doe Fund cleaning crews arrived. Could it be that with some homeless men really *working* in public spaces, it has become more untenable for others to "work" the streets in the old manner?

Programs like the Doe Fund suggest that the rotten edifice created by the consent decree and by organizations such as the Coalition for the Homeless is tottering and needs only a well-placed push. Maybe now, at the end of a first Giuliani administration that has so effectively recast the terms of the city's welfare reform debate, there really is a golden opportunity to end the destructive regime of homeless class rights imposed by the courts.

As George McDonald puts it: "When the history of this issue is written, it will be judged a profound failure that social policy in New York City was set by judges and courts—a profound failure and an incredible waste of resources. Think of all the money that's gone down this rat hole of a shelter system that could have been spent in actually getting people out of the conditions they were in." He knows whereof he speaks.

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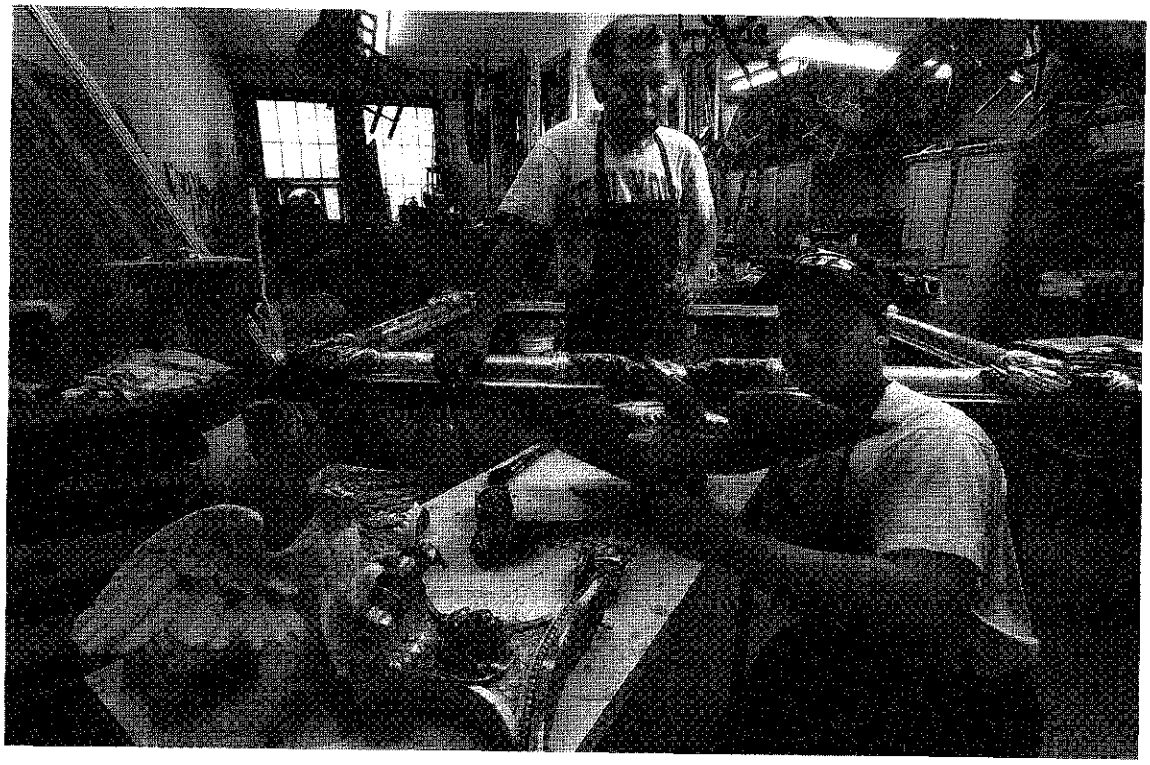
BROOKLYN NAVY YARD



PHOTOGRAPHS BY BRUCE DAVIDSON

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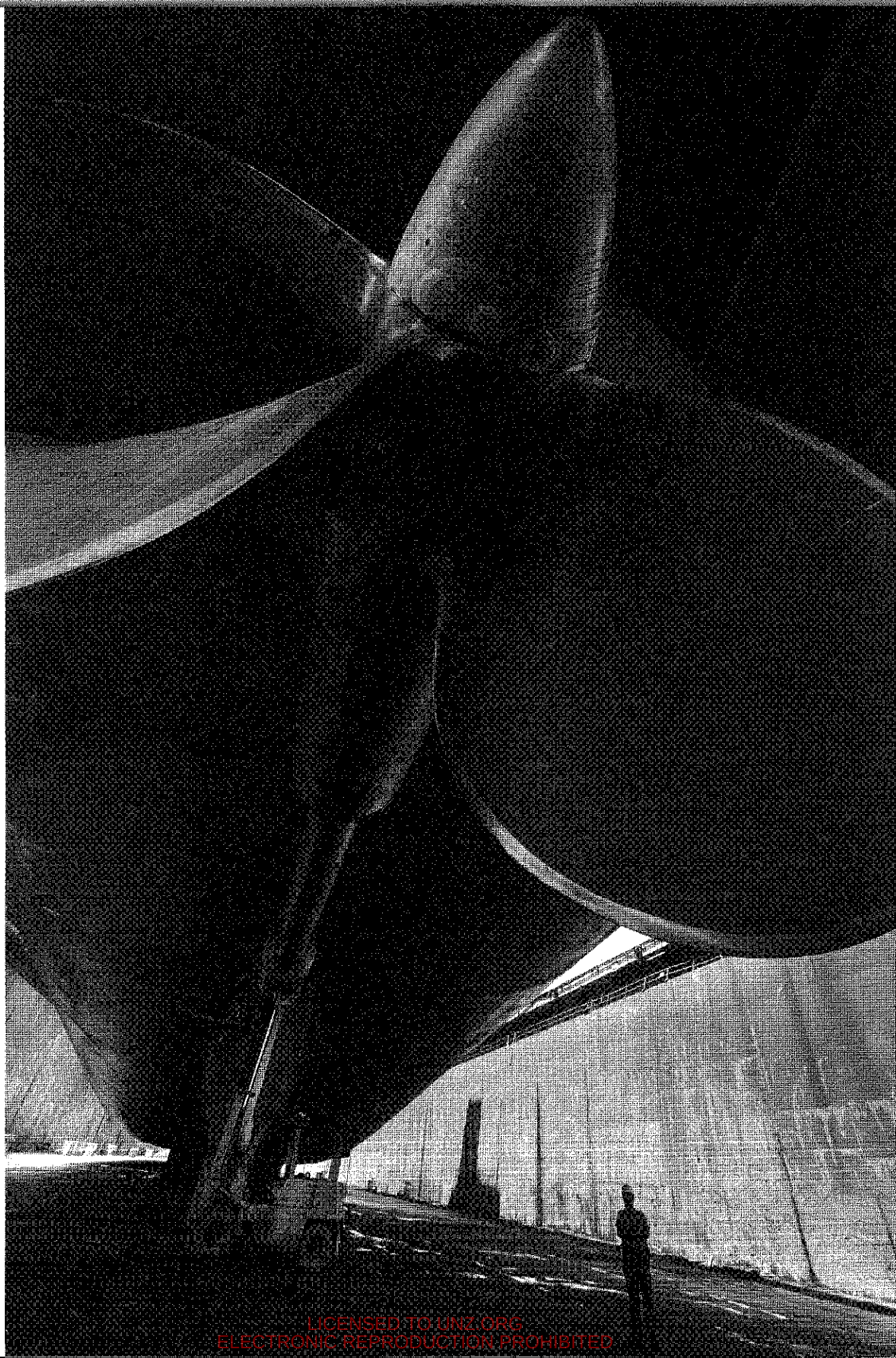

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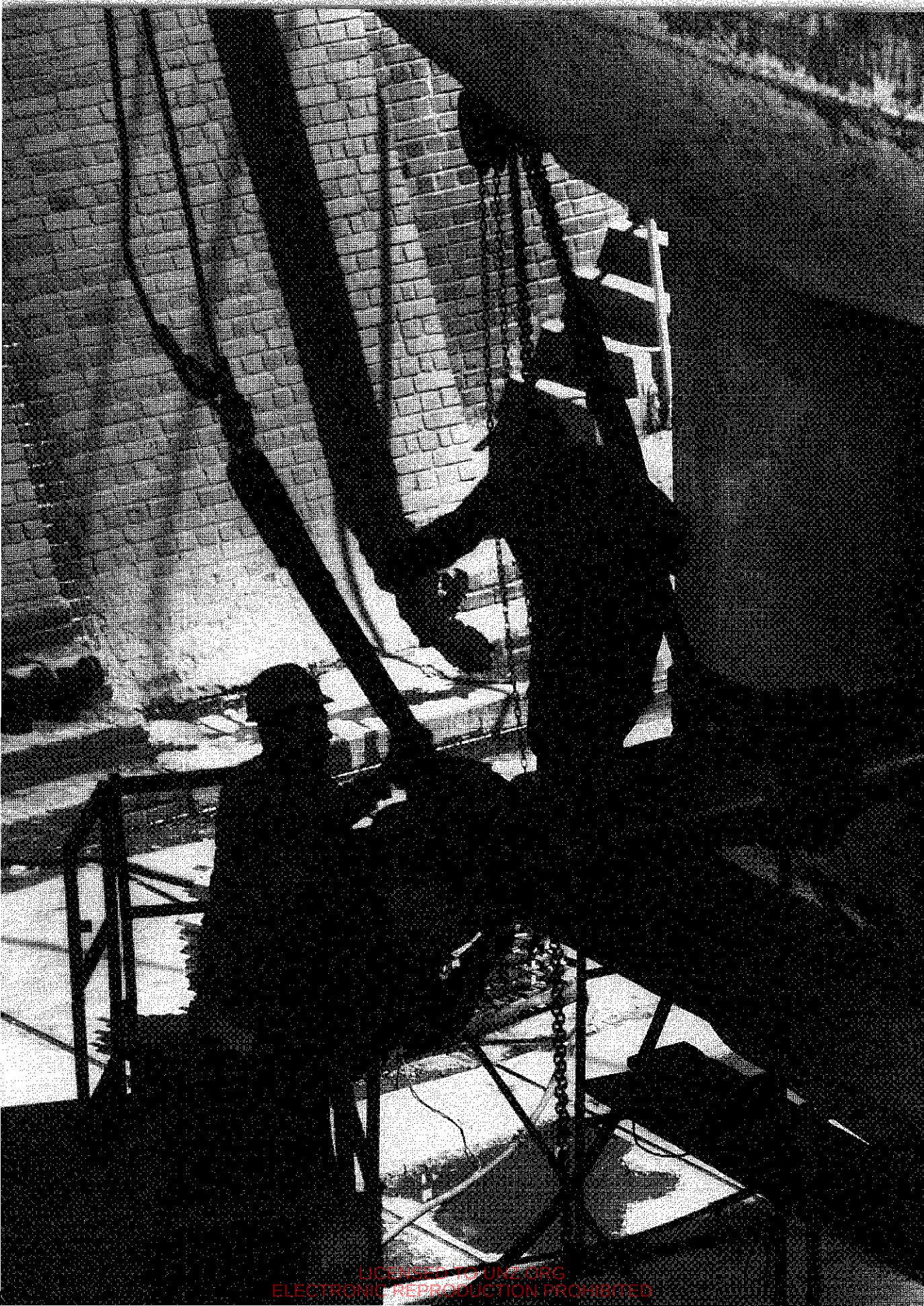

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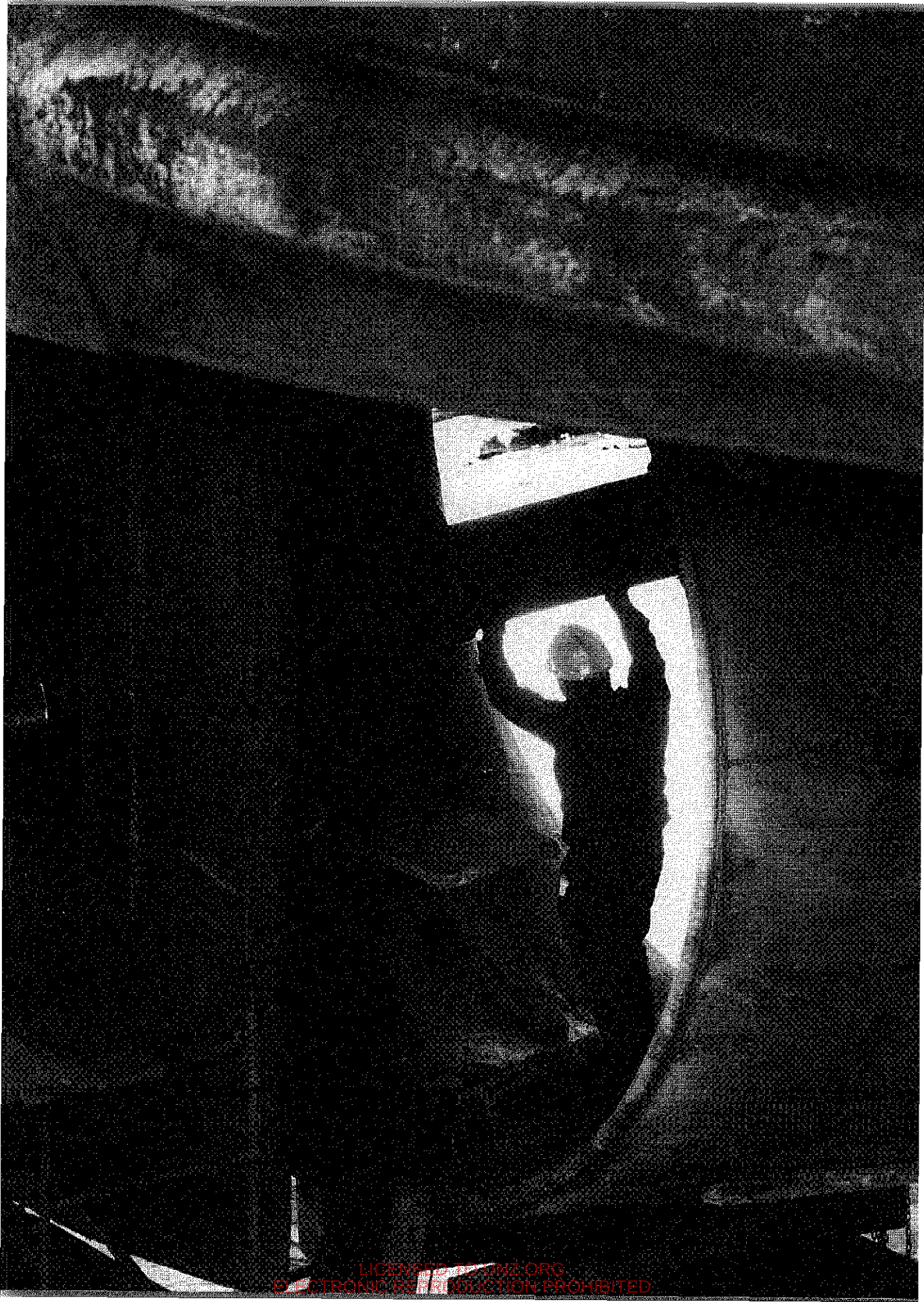

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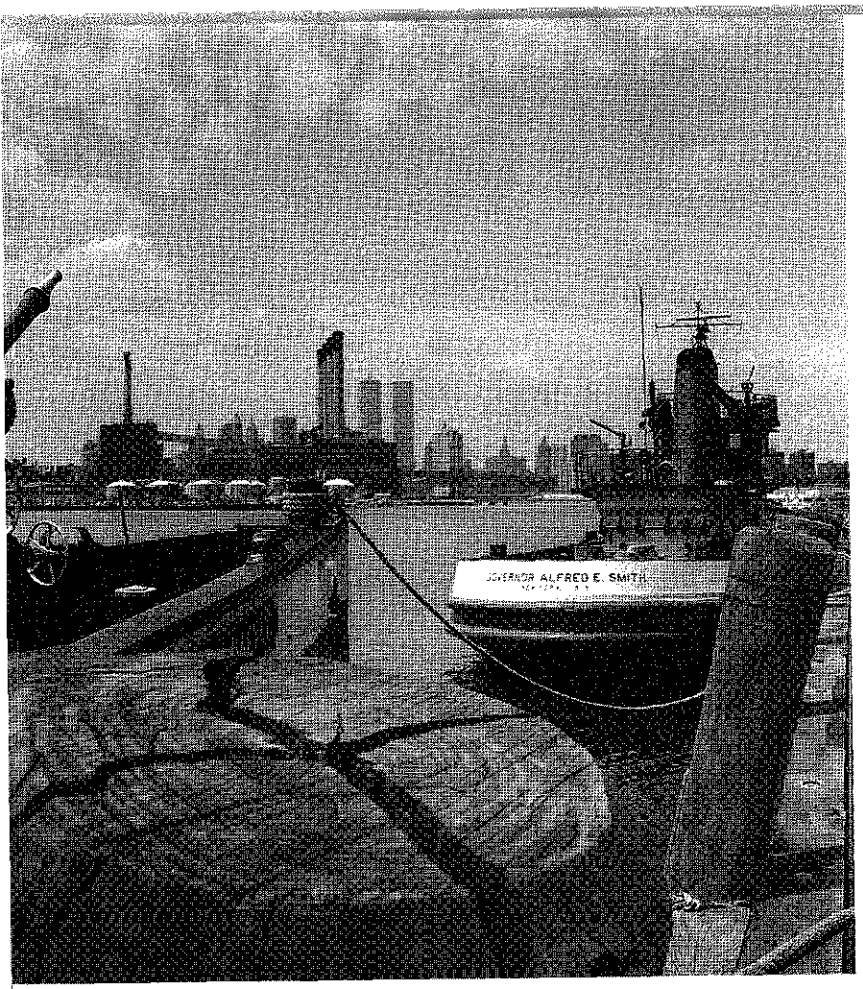

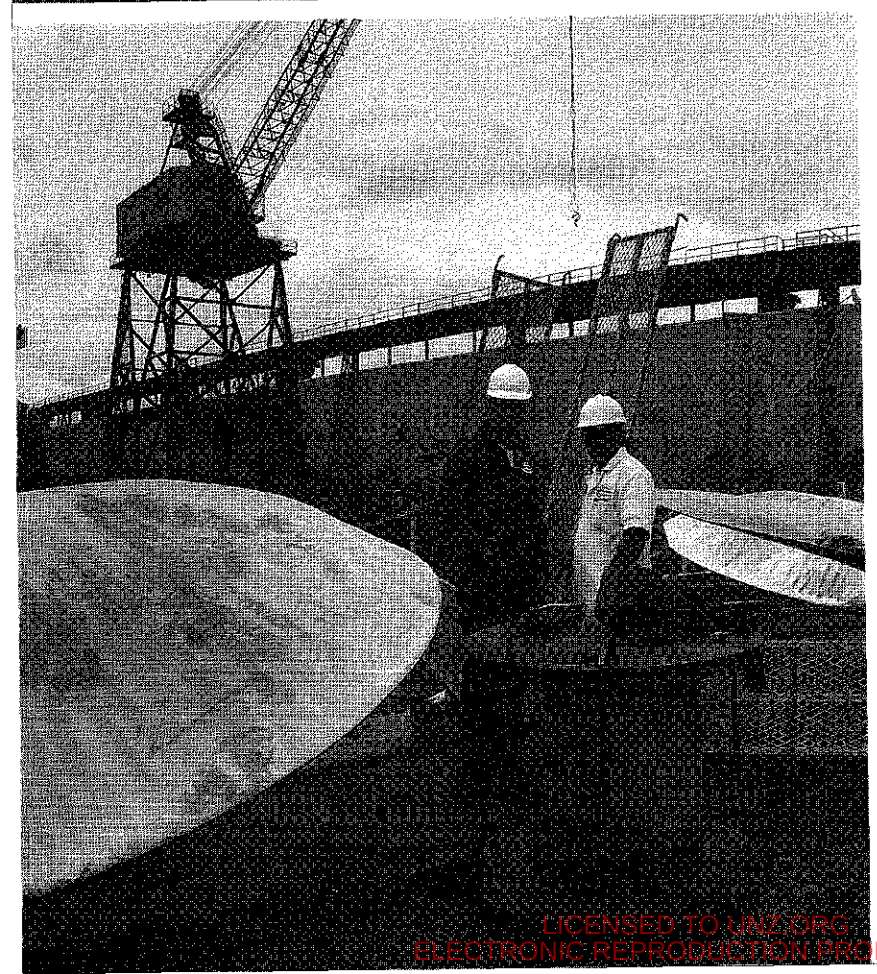

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Isaac Singer's Promised City

Stefan Kanfer

"The ultimate New Yorker": in the last several years I have seen that description applied to Leonard Bernstein, Rudolph Giuliani, and—in a critique denouncing his latest excesses—Donald Trump. One could advance good arguments for granting the title to any of these gentlemen, but my choice remains a Polish-born author who came here as an adult, wrote in a foreign tongue, and spent his last years in Florida. It may seem perverse, but to me Isaac Bashevis Singer represents New York in all its glory, anguish, genius, and contradictions.

E. B. White, in his classic essay "Here Is New York," points out that the true New Yorkers are not the ones who were born here but the "out-of-towners in search of a dream." Bilgoray, the tiny, God-haunted Polish village where so many Singer stories unfold, could not have been more remote from the adrenal style and hard edges of Manhattan. Yet the author chose to spend the bulk of his life in our borough. When I first met him at his favorite hangout, the Famous Restaurant on 72nd Street, he was not I. B. Singer the Nobel laureate. He was simply a quiet, intense figure with a bald dome, a fine-boned face, and delicate skin that seemed almost transparent. A demonic aura hovered about him, reinforced by glinting blue eyes and high prominent ears. By then, Singer's reputation was no longer confined to the Yiddish-speaking readers of the *Jewish Daily Forward*. But to most of the English-reading world he was still a coterie writer whose strange short stories appeared in *Commentary* and certain quarterlies, and whose novels of old-world Jewry were an acquired taste. That afternoon Singer spoke of his adopted home, comparing it to Kafka: "Both are flawed, but touched by greatness. One of each kind is something of a marvel. But two Kafkas, two New Yorks, would be a disaster."

As the editor of *Time*'s book review section, I assayed each of his books as they were published, and our meetings grew more regular. He never became informal: except on the hottest days he dressed in a dark suit, white shirt, and tie; we were always Mr. Kanfer (Mr. "Kenfeh" was the way he pronounced it) and Mr. Singer. It was not in him to use the confessional style in conversation; he would have been utterly lost in today's Grand Oprah of interview TV. But he did grow easier in his manner, and the reminiscences of New York, tentative at first, grew more fluent as we went along.

Singer first entered our great, flawed arena at the age of 30. He was preceded by his brother Israel Joshua, also a writer, and the scandal of the family. I. J., as he was to sign his writings, was not only a novelist but a radical who had shocked his pious parents by forsaking the insular Hasidic world for the cosmopolitan precincts of Warsaw. "To become a *literat*," recalled the younger sibling, "was to them almost as bad as becoming a *meshumed*, one who forsakes the faith."

In time I. J. came to see life in political terms, absorbing the inflammatory new ideas of socialism, Zionism, and the rights of labor. His work drew the attention of the progressive Abraham Cahan, editor of the *Forward*, who hired him as the paper's Warsaw correspondent, expressed delight in what he received, and encouraged the young man to join the staff in New York. In 1933, I. J. accepted the offer. He would never see Europe again. Two years later Isaac became a follower in every sense of the word. He, too, hoped to find a career in the Promised City. He, too, despised the established Stalin as much as he feared and execrated the rising Hitler. He, too, fled the world he would then use as his literary capital. Yet there was a difference: I. J. had brought his wife and child with him to New York. Isaac Bashevis's new wife, Runya, had been spending much of her time gazing east at the USSR. Her husband wanted no part of the Worker's Paradise. In 1935, Runya and their little child, also named Israel, went off to the Soviet Union. Isaac booked passage for America. He knew three words of English: "Take a chair."

"Even the pigeons know me," said Isaac Bashevis Singer of his West Side neighborhood.

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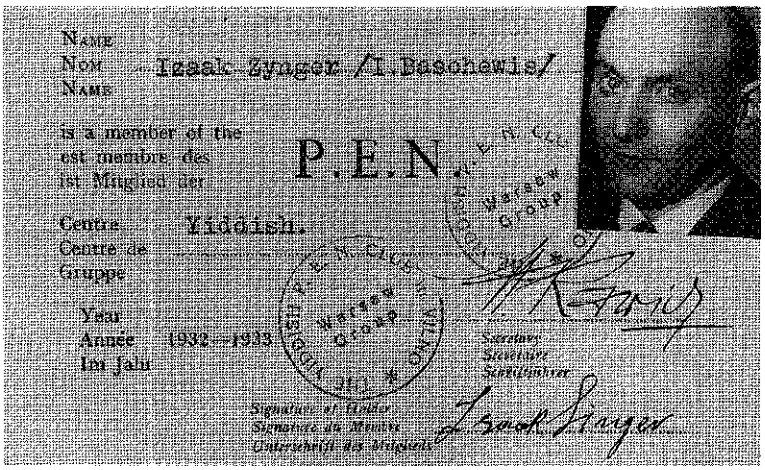

Courtesy Harry Ransom Humanities Center

Then as now, New York was a lodestar for immigrants, the young, and the lucky. Isaac fell into all three categories. The Third Reich was making its move in Poland, eventually dooming the Singers' widowed mother and a third brother, Moishe. Thanks to I. J., Isaac had avoided their fate. But sanctuary was not enough. A man had to eat, to work, to get on in the New World. There is a Yiddish saying: "God will provide. If only He would provide *until* He provides." Somehow, Isaac received provisions. A cheap Brooklyn flat housed his few personal items—a Yiddish typewriter, a few articles of clothing, a handful of indispensable volumes. Regular but minuscule payments came from the *Forward*, which ran his features and tales under the byline I. B. Singer. His relations with the newspaper—which turned 100 this year and is now published in English as well—remained close throughout his life.

The *Forward* readership of that time regarded Singer with an almost mystical awe. He was the bard of their exile, a man who could make vanished towns rise up from the page, who could breathe life into lost souls, from the ritual slaughterer to the terrified young bride. Not for him a documentary recounting of the Holocaust. Instead he let the survivors talk, remember, and gossip. In one tale, a group of old friends greet one another: "You don't recognize me, eh? Take a good look! It's Zissl, the son of Chaye Beytle!" "Why don't you eat something?" "Why don't you have something to drink? Come over here, take a glass. What do you want? Whiskey? Brandy? Cognac? Scotch? With soda? With Coca Cola? Take some. It's good. Don't let it stand. So long as you're here, you might as well enjoy yourself." "My father? He was killed. They were all killed. I'm the only one left of the entire family." "Berish the son of Feivish? Starved to death in Russia—they sent him to Kazakhstan. His wife? In Israel. She married a Lithuanian." "Sorele? Shot. Together with her children." "Yentl? Here at the wedding. She was standing here just a minute ago. There she is, dancing with that tall fellow." "Abraham Zilberstein? They burned him in the synagogue with twenty others. A mound of charcoal was all that was left, coal and ash." What remained in the mind was more than a record of destruction; readers felt, in poet Theodore Roethke's memorable phrase, "the terrible energy of the dead."

Fanatically, Isaac's readers snipped out his contributions to the *Forward*, pressing them between the pages of books until the newspaper clips grew yellow and broke apart in the hand. There were an astonishing number of pieces to save. Stories, reminiscences, excerpts from Singer's novels appeared in the paper every Thursday and Friday, 48 weeks a year, pausing only for the author's one-month summer vacation. Long after checks began to arrive from major magazines (and even from film producers like Barbra Streisand, who bought "Yentl" to make into a deservedly forgotten movie), he still wrote for the *Forward*. In time this was to become his pro bono work, done to keep Yiddish alive for a rapidly dwindling readership. Singer's editors were broke but grateful; they made up for their parsimony with freedom. Now and then, for example, a shocked rabbi would demand

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the excision of Isaac's franker sexual passages. One of Cahan's successors, Simon Weber, had a standard reply: "I would be as likely to make changes in a manuscript by Bashevis as in a text of Tolstoy's or Dostoevsky's. If he writes an article and there's an error in it, that's corrected. But one does not tamper with literature on that level."

When I was finally invited to Isaac Bashevis Singer's apartment, I asked to see photographs of him during his early years in America. The walls were crowded with various tributes—the National Book Award, the Newbery Medal, some dozen honorary degrees, shelf upon shelf of books, some upright, some sideways. There were also a few photographs of the author in various locations overseas and here, but none of him as a youth. He referred to a passage in one of his brother's early novels. In it there appears a character obviously modeled on Isaac: "He is not what you would call handsome; he is red-headed, his face is covered with freckles, but there's an irresistible charm about him." The man is "a great teller of stories and the delight of the children; for he can crow like a cock, cluck like a hen struggling to get out a big egg, coo like a pigeon making love."

That apartment—Isaac's last in New York—was in a splendid pile of bricks called the Belnord. In his day it suffered from neglect: graffiti marred the facade, the elevators were dark and malodorous, and the vast interior courtyards looked unswept. Yet there was a majesty to the place: you seldom found that much unused space outside of Grand Central Terminal. It reminded me of countless structures in Eastern Europe, houses designed to keep the world at bay as they encouraged an inner, civilized life. Today the Belnord is refurbished, warmer, more attractive, with a phalanx of doormen. But something is missing, as it is throughout the West Side.

Once upon a time, the old population of intellectual Jewry held sway in the district, beginning way up on Claremont Avenue, where Lionel and Diana Trilling lived, all the way down to the elaborate Ansonia, home of Metropolitan Opera divas. Every sunny Saturday, in a scene out of a Singer novel, West End Avenue turned into a promenade. Behatted, well-dressed men strolled in serious conversation, their hands clasped behind their backs, while the wives walked on independently, arm-in-arm, smiling graciously to couples heading the other way. Almost all of that populace is gone, and with it the emporia that served them. On Broadway the landmarks once were Rosenbloom's Old World delicatessen, Steinberg's Dairy Restaurant, and the tonier Tip Toe Inn. Now-vanished pharmacies and rug merchants and furriers, whose owners had numbers tattooed on their arms, dotted the spaces in between. Those places have long since become fern bars or outlets for yuppie wear.

To be sure, the region contains a few promising young conservatives with a regard for the past, and a handful of Eastern European thinkers push their aluminum walkers along the side streets. And Isaac is present in more than a literary sense. Next time you're on West 86th Street between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue, look up. The sign placed there in 1990 reads "Isaac Bashevis Singer Boulevard." But for the most part the Upper West Side houses the basic ahistorical constituency of Ruth Messinger. Quite an irony, given Isaac's record at the polls. "Yes, I voted for Nixon," he once confessed to me. "I thought he was good for Israel. Besides, I have seen what the promises of socialism did to people, Jews especially, and I would rather keep to the right. Actually, this is not so big a move for me. Even in the thirties I was never fond of these cafeteria leftists."

In among Isaac's snapshots was a picture of a familiar couple in an earlier time. It prompted a recollection of the Yiddish theater's old slogan, "Why have it simple when you can have it complicated?" There, strolling along a Manhattan street was the irresistible charmer and a married German-Jewish refugee. Back and forth the liaison went in the late thirties: Isaac wasn't anxious to marry again, he had no money, he felt guilty about enticing Alma Wasserman away from her husband and two children, he could scarcely afford to buy his own meals, much less dinner for two.

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Bruce Davidson/Magnum (2)

On the other hand, Alma was . . . Alma. He had been with many women in America, but no one else combined her beauty, cultivation, and forbearance. In 1939, after much angst, Alma left her family, allowing her husband custody of the children. The following year the Singers were married in a civil ceremony and set up an apartment in Brooklyn.

Now they were authentic New Yorkers. Writing in a language that was rapidly being destroyed in Europe, Isaac continued to eke out a living. The *Forward* supplied almost all of it; his novel *Satan in Goray*, earned $90 in royalties. Alma became the real challah-winner, working as a salesclerk, then as a personal shopper at Arnold Constable, and later at Saks and Lord & Taylor. That left Isaac free to ponder—and to wander.

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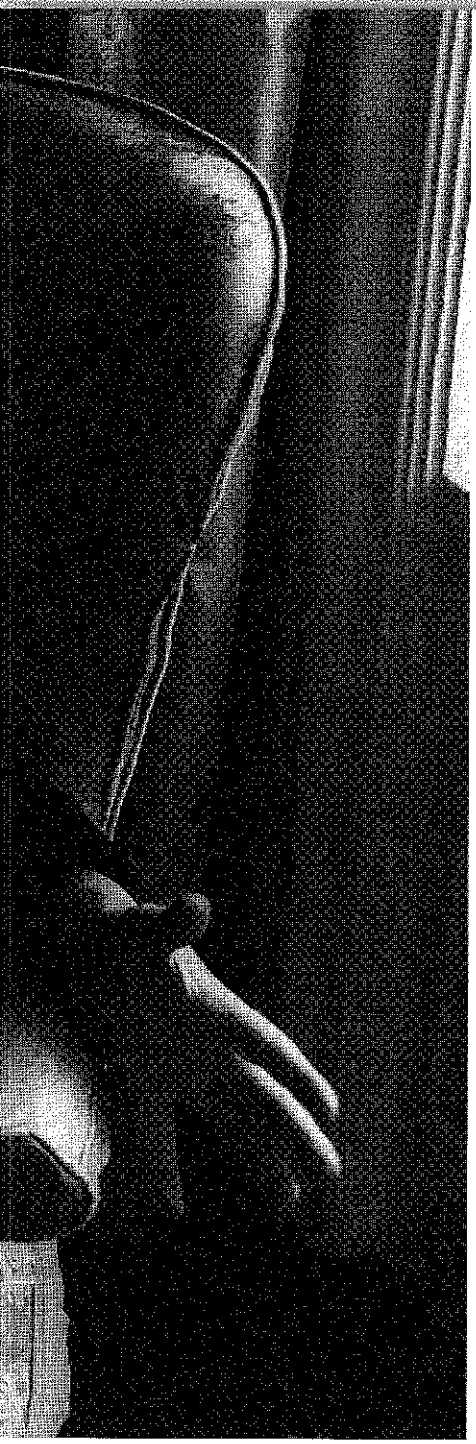

In a vivid biography Paul Kresh describes the Singers' long marriage, conducted in the style of a vanished pre-feminist New York: "Alma is aware of Isaac's difficulties in adhering to the traditional requirements of monogamy but feels that they have both invested so many years in their marriage that parting would be unthinkable. She has never forgotten the emotional upheaval that followed her separation from her first husband and does not ever want to go through such an experience again. She herself has no wish to experiment with adventures outside her marriage; the whole idea is numbing to her. 'And I must remind you,' she adds, 'Isaac is basically a very conservative person.' She doubts he would accept infidelity on her part."

For the first decades of the marriage, Isaac's works were centered on the country of his youth. Even the stories that featured imps and demons took place in Bilgoray, a distillation of all Polish shtetls. The Hasids and Polish Christians in these tales were dressed in the costumes of old, and they were observant—or defiant—in traditional ways. But the narratives of their adventures were informed by all the elements in the modernist arsenal: sublimation and sexual confusion, irony, an allusive, nervous style that saw everything and judged no one. Isaac's style reflected his new status: during the war he had become a citizen of the U.S. ("I would not trade the certificate proving I am an American," he declared, "for all the money in the world.") Still, he was not yet secure enough to use New York for the background of his stories until a series of incidents forced his hand. The first was his brother's sudden, fatal heart attack in 1944. "It was a shock from which I have never truly recovered," the author acknowledged. He dedicated books and lectures to his brother's memory, and whenever I brought up the subject of Israel Joshua's writing, Isaac Bashevis answered in an exalted tone, as if he were referring to a father, a teacher, a master. And yet in a strange way, I. J.'s death seemed to liberate him.

"By this time," he recalled, "Alma and I were living on the Upper West Side. I walked the streets constantly, thinking of my brother, thinking of what might have happened if he had not preceded me here." The answer was excruciating to contemplate: almost certainly, like the remnants of his family, he would have perished at Auschwitz. Now, in New York, he was allowed—even encouraged—to write about anything, anyone. Would he remain rooted to the vanished past? Could he direct his thoughts and his writing to the New World? Indeed, could he write at all?

For several years he did little more than brood and talk to a handful of colleagues. At last he began a novel based in old Poland, *The Family Moskat*. It was not until 1950, when he was 46, that it appeared in three languages: Yiddish, Hebrew in the two-year-old state of Israel, and—most significant—English. The publisher: his brother's trusted friend Alfred A. Knopf.

The relationship with the house of Knopf didn't endure. The editors demanded alterations and abbreviations, which Isaac

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made, though he thought they smacked of "slickness." Then he saw John Hersey's novel about the Warsaw ghetto, *The Wall*, composed from secondary and tertiary material, rise to the top of the best-seller list, while his own book, written from experience, remained well-regarded but unpromoted and obscure. It hardly seemed fair. Here again a prototypical New York writer, Isaac resolved to change publishers. In time Alfred Knopf grudgingly admitted that his treatment of Isaac had been "a blunder of the first order."

Two years later Isaac's fortunes began to change. His story "Gimpel the Fool" attracted the attention of a rising Jewish novelist. Saul Bellow's translation appeared in the New York–based *Partisan Review* of May 1953. "This was not a big magazine," recalled Singer, "but it appeared that everyone of significance read that issue." With the clarity of a folk tale, "Gimpel" recounts the misadventures of a Jewish simpleton who is mocked by the crowd, cuckolded by his wife, tempted to vengeance by the devil—yet who manages through a hard and painful life to remain a purer soul than those with better minds and fatter purses. Isaac's new publisher, Noonday Press, brought out a collection of Singer stories, with "Gimpel" at the head. Readers snapped up the volume, even though the author hadn't played the publicity game: he had appeared on no talk shows, gone to no glitterati parties, made no political or social statements.

Indeed, he had gone the other way, persisting in unfashionable, irrational beliefs, subscribing to occult magazines like *Fate*, and arguing that imps and demons were all around us. Once, when I commented on his various superstitions, he reminded me: "It took thousands of years for Pasteur to discover there were germs. Maybe it will take a few hundred years more for science to discover there are other hidden creatures." I told him he reminded me of Don Marquis's cockroach, archy, who stated that he didn't believe in ghosts because he had seen too many of them. The author nodded in appreciation. Ambitious literary competitors marked Singer down as an exotic, a man wholly preoccupied with vanished shtetls and lunatic visions—hardly a threat in the fame game. It was a classic miscalculation.

Before long the big-league critics began to sit up and talk. Irving Howe, the ur–New York Jewish intellectual, called Singer a genius. Henry Miller, who knew a little something about writing liberated prose, praised the extraordinary presence of sexual passion in so much of Singer's fiction. He found it "full-bodied like a rich wine." And with the lust came "love, a bigger, broader love than we are accustomed to reading in books." Conversing with Norman Mailer on television, Miller asked the younger man to concede that Singer was a better writer than either of them. There must have been something in the air that day: Mailer allowed as how Miller was right.

Finally, Singer felt secure enough to make New York the backdrop of his stories. In "The Key," an aging widow, friendless and alone, locks herself out of her Upper West Side apartment. Night closes in. Terrified by her run-down neighborhood, surrounded by depravity of all kinds, she survives by huddling in the doorway of a church, where she awakens in the morning perfectly unharmed—a strange, ecumenical miracle. In "Cabalist of East Broadway," a mystic lives in obscurity in New York, goes to Israel, where he is treated as a celebrity, then, goaded by the kind of demon that drives so many of Singer's characters, returns to New York only to sink back into a life of utter misery. In "The Cafeteria," the narrator, Singer's alter ego, concedes, "I have been moving around this neighborhood for over thirty years—as long as I lived in Poland. I know each block, each house. There has been little building here on uptown Broadway in the last decades, and I have the illusion of having put down roots here. I have spoken in most of the synagogues. They know me in some of the stores and in the vegetarian restaurants. Women with whom I have had affairs live on the side streets. Even the pigeons know me; the moment I come out with a bag of feed, they begin to fly toward me from blocks away."

Most New York writers are either creatures of envy or cre-

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ators of it. Whatever his inner feelings, Singer never slandered his fellow authors; he did worse—he rarely recognized their existence. But they noticed him. Nowhere was his success more remarked upon (and resented) than in the febrile and diminished world of competing Yiddish writers. In her short story "Envy," Cynthia Ozick cannily portrayed these competitors: "They hated him for the amazing thing that had happened to him—his fame—but this they never referred to. Instead they discussed his style: his Yiddish was impure, his sentences lacked grace and sweep, his paragraph transitions were amateur, vile. Or else they raged against his subject matter, which was insanely sexual, pornographic, paranoid, freakish—men who embraced men, women who caressed women, sodomists of every variety, boys copulating with hens, butchers who drank blood for strength behind the knife. All the stories were set in an imaginary Polish village, Zwrdl, and by now there was almost no American intellectual alive who had not learned to say Zwrdl when he meant lewd." (Well aware of the intent of this tale, I once disingenuously asked Singer what he thought of it. "I haven't read the story," he replied coolly. "But I understand it maligns me." End of discussion.)

The ultimate certification of Isaac Bashevis Singer as New Yorker came when he appeared in *The New Yorker*, then a weekly of great distinction. That periodical had run many Jewish memoirs: Hannah Arendt had dissected the Holocaust in its pages; George Steiner had made a specialty of fiction with a foreign sensibility. But Singer's short stories were not the magazine's customary mix of ethnicity and mildly suggestive romance. They were erotic, mystical, hard-edged, with no concessions made to the reader. They were also impossible to put down. "The writer's first obligation is to entertain," he told me on more than one occasion. "Leave to others the business of explication. This is why, in the end, children make better critics than adults. To them it doesn't matter if you are well known or obscure. No one tells them what to like. If you don't catch their interest, if they get bored—you're lost."

Which is why, at the age of 64, when other men his age were beginning to think about drawing Social Security, he began a new career. Still writing for *The New Yorker*—and the *Forward*—still lecturing, still voyaging now and then to Israel to visit the son with whom he had been reunited (the first Mrs. Singer had been one of the lucky ones: she was allowed to emigrate to Palestine rather than die in a labor camp), still publishing books at the rate of one a year, Isaac debuted as a children's book author. The voices and personalities of small kids tend to get on the nerves of older folk. Not on Isaac's. He kept working the streets of the West Side, drawing inspiration from the most child-oriented portion of Manhattan. He said he knew 500 reasons to write for children and offered his top ten. Among them: "Children read books, not reviews. They don't give a hoot about the critics." And: "They still believe in God, the family, angels, devils, witches, goblins, logic, clarity, punctuation, and other such obsolete stuff." Most important: "They don't expect their beloved writer to redeem humanity. Young as they are, they know it is not in his power. Only the adults have such childish illusions."

If chronology meant nothing to Isaac, it meant even less to the Swedish Academy. In the mid-seventies, Edmund Wilson put Singer at the head of his list for Nobel laureate; Rebecca West echoed the critic's enthusiasm in her own letter. Nevertheless, Saul Bellow, Isaac's junior by 11 years, won the prize in 1976. A certain amount of grumbling and lobbying ensued (none of it by Isaac), and two years later the prize was his. The Singers were spending the High Holidays in Florida when the news came in.

The world wanted to talk to him, of course, and he was unavailable. But the old man had always played a deep game with the press, as befits a New Yorker. Just as Woody Allen always contrives to be out of reach of photographers and journalists but is somehow always caught on camera avoiding the paparazzi, so Isaac managed to retain his reputation for shyness and mod-

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esty—yet managed to meet and talk to everyone necessary to bolster his reputation. By his late sixties he had worked out a series of answers to journalists that kept appearing in various interviews. (Question: "Why are you a vegetarian? Is it because of your health?" Answer: "I'm not worried about my arteries. I'm worried about the arteries of the chicken." Q: "What is your philosophy?" A: "We must believe in free will—we have no choice.") I sensed that Singer would not let me down, if only because he couldn't stand to see a story in *Time* magazine without fresh quotes. I called his New York number; his publisher, Farrar, Straus & Giroux; a number in Florida. Nothing. Then, five minutes before deadline, I got a call.

"Mr. Kenfeh? I understand you have been trying to reach me." The voice and the accent were unmistakable (actually, what I heard was, "I yonderstend you hev been tryink to rich me"; no one in the world had quite that intonation, not even those members of my family who had come from the same area). He sensed the urgency in my questions and replied rapidly: "Winning the Nobel has made me grateful and happy. But it will not change anything. Everything will remain the same—same typewriter, same apartment, wife, same telephone number, same language. I am thankful, of course, for the prize—and thankful to God for each story, each idea, each word, each day." And would he go to Stockholm to receive the award in person? "What can I do? I will go, and I will make a little speech. It will not shake the world."

He was right; it didn't shake the world. As W. H. Auden noted, "Poetry makes nothing happen"—nor does fiction, no matter how poetic. And yet . . . and yet. Singer gave his Nobel speech in Yiddish—a first—and reminded his audience that astonishments can be found in the real world, as well as the fictive one. "There are some who call Yiddish a dead language, but so was Hebrew called for 2,000 years. It has been revived in our time in a most remarkable, almost miraculous, way." In this speech he also made sure to mention his adopted city: "Some of my cronies in the cafeteria near the *Jewish Daily Forward* in New York call me a pessimist and a decadent, but there is always a background of faith behind resignation."

The faith persisted to the end. In one of our last conversations, Singer spoke about God as Author: "I know as a writer how valuable a tool is the wastebasket. Perhaps God throws away many experiments before He finds the right expression. Perhaps we are the discards—or we could be the part He keeps. This mystery is what keeps us all going, to see what happens in the next chapter." What happened to the laureate was more fame and honors and sales—and then a gradual decline, silence, and a quiet death in Seaside, Florida, in 1991 at the age of 87. The afternoon the obituary notice came in, I reread the citation given to Singer by Professor Lars Gyllensten, permanent secretary of the Swedish Academy. In the writer's works, the professor had said, "the daily round is interwoven with wonders, reality is spun from dreams, the blood of the past pulsates in the present." His characters were "tragic and grotesque, comic and touching, weird and wonderful—people of dream and torment, baseness and grandeur."

I remembered reading those words for the first time in the spring of 1979, just after Singer had returned from Sweden. We were standing on the corner of 86th and Broadway, and I told him that the academy's citation could serve as a portrait of the people and places of Manhattan. "And why not?" he asked. "Torment, baseness, and grandeur. Does anyone think these attributes died in Poland? Look around. They're right here with us. New York is a city very much like Bilgoray." I added: "Only smaller." "Bilgoray?" he asked. "No," I said. "New York." He thought about that, and repeated, "Only smaller." We shook hands and he went off smiling, the navy blue suit in contrast to the first inklings of the grunge look—the black lipstick, the shapeless pants, the green and blue hair—on the young people around him. When I close my eyes, I see him that way now, not in a shtetl or in a tailcoat accepting plaudits but as a spry figure making his way among the weird and wonderful. The ultimate New Yorker. •

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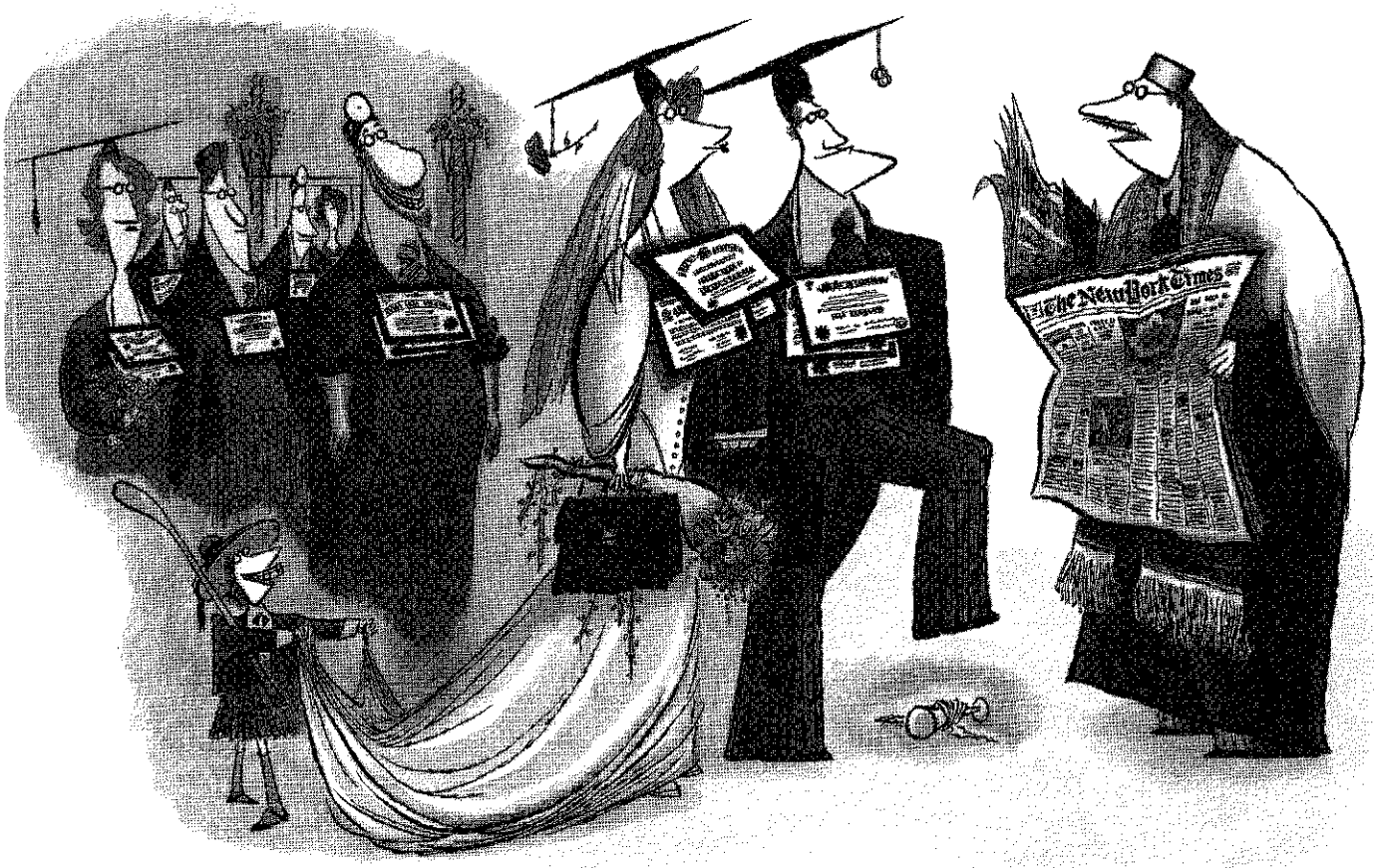
New-Class Nuptials

David Brooks

I'm not sure I'd like to be one of the people featured on the *New York Times* wedding page, but I know I'd like to be the father of one of them. Imagine how happy Stanley J. Kogan must have been, for example, when his daughter Jamie got into Yale. Then imagine his pride when Jamie made Phi Beta Kappa and graduated summa cum laude. Stanley himself is no slouch in the brains department: he's a pediatric urologist in Croton-on-Hudson with teaching positions at the Cornell Medical Center and the New York Medical College. Still, he must have enjoyed a gloat or two when his daughter put on that cap and gown.

And things only got better. Jamie breezed through Stanford Law School. And then she met a man—Thomas Arena—who appears to be exactly the sort of son-in-law that pediatric urologists dream about. He did his undergraduate work at Princeton, where he too made Phi Bete and graduated summa cum laude. And he too went to law school, at Yale. Now they both work as assistant U.S. attorneys for the mighty Southern District of New York, Rudy Giuliani's old stomping grounds.

These two awesome résumés collided at a wedding ceremony on April 19, 1997, at the Hudson Theater on West 44th Street, with Rabbi Chaim Stern performing. It must have been one of the happiest days in Stanley J. Kogan's life. The rest of us got to read about it on the *New York Times* wedding page.



The WEDDING (C.V.?) PAGE

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Urbanities

The wedding page is a weekly obsession for thousands of *Times* readers and aspiring Victor Hugos. Unabashedly elitist, secretive (believe me, I've tried to get information out of the page's editors), and therefore totally honest, the "mergers and acquisitions page"—as many of its devotees call it—has always provided an accurate look at an important chunk of the American ruling class. And over the years it has reflected the transformation of the American establishment.

In the 1950s the wedding section could spread out over 16 pages. Then, as now, it carefully identified the crucial elements of elite status. In those days, however, it wasn't jobs and advanced degrees. The wedding page of that time almost never listed the profession of the groom or bride, or of the parents of the happy couple. Instead, the *Times* listed connections: a distinguished ancestor, all the ushers and bridesmaids, colleges and prep schools, and whether the bride belonged to the Junior League, say, or the groom to the Yale Club. The wedding gown came in for description in loving detail, as did the floral arrangements at the ceremony.

As you read through the wedding page of that time, sentences jump out that would never be found on today's wedding page: "She is descended from Richard Warren, who came to Brookhaven in 1664. Her husband, a descendant of Dr. Benjamin Treadwell, who settled in Old Westbury in 1767, is an alumnus of Gunnery School and a senior at Colgate University." Or, "Mrs. Williams is an alumna of Ashley Hall and Smith College. A provisional member of the Junior League of New York, she was presented to society in 1952 at the Debutante Cotillion and Christmas Ball."

The wedding pages of the 1970s serve as a pretty reliable midpoint between the WASP elite pages of the 1950s and the high-pressure meritocratic pages of today. By 1977 the *Times* no longer described the wedding gown or the floral arrangements. But it still regularly mentioned Junior League memberships and which ball was the scene of the bride's entry into society. But overlaying these old-fashioned references were the résumé items that we're familiar with from the current pages. There are more couples with careers in the media, adding a little variety to the normal parade of bankers and lawyers from white-shoe firms.

Even as late as 1989, the wedding page was still tracing the decline of the WASP elite. In June of that year, *Washington Post* writer Richard Cohen wrote a column confessing his love for the *Times* wedding page. Cohen said that he read the page as a way to exercise vestigial class animosities and indulge his obsession with dynastic marriages. In his ideal wedding notice, the groom is from a family that made its fortune in the slave trade, and the bride is descended from a robber baron who made a pile abusing immigrants. Each family has two houses. One mother is an interior decorator (meaning that she feels compelled to have an occupation . . . though she mostly lunches). One father now lives in Spain (with a woman half his age, squandering the remains of the family fortune). The ideal Cohen bride went to small-college-you've-never-heard-of—where polite girls learn horseback riding—and the groom went to a huge state university and studied marketing (but mostly drank beer).

But now, eight years later, Cohen would be unable to exercise his scorn for that pampered WASP elite, for its long decline is finally complete. Nor would he be able to exercise any scorn for the new establishment—because he is the new establishment. And so are the people around him at the *Washington Post*.

During the 1990s a new elite has coalesced, and it is found—as much as anywhere—on the wedding page of the *New York Times*. Whereas the old establishment was based on birth and breeding, this new establishment rests on education and career. Whereas the old establishment had connections, this establishment has ambition. Whereas the old aspired to good manners, the new aspires to enlightened consciousness. The old establishment cultivated reticence (the 1957 page listed no ages); the

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NURTURERS & PREDATORS

new establishment cultivates candor (ages now appear, as do divorces). To put it another way, the *New York Times* no longer just reports the doings of the society set—it is *part* of the society set, along with the lawyers, brokers, publicists, architects, and gallery owners to whom high-flight journalists now tend to be married.

Episcopalians and Jews serve as tracer elements that mark the transformation from an elite based on blood to an elite based on education and brains. It's hard to track cleanly the decline of New York's Episcopalian elite and the succession of the city's Jews, because until recently Jewish weddings held on Sunday were reported separately, in the *Times*'s Monday edition (observant Jews don't wed on Saturday, and the *Times*, treating weddings as news events, long would not write about them until they had occurred). Still, by looking at the raw numbers, you can see the basic trend. In the spring of 1957, 55 percent of the couples featured on the Sunday wedding page were Episcopalians. Other Protestants constituted 31 percent of the weddings, and Catholics were 14 percent. In 1977, 48 percent of the weddings were Episcopalian. Catholic weddings made up 21 percent of those listed. Jews made their appearance at 12 percent. Other Protestants were 15 percent, and non-religious ceremonies registered on the scale at

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UNMENTIONABLE EPISCOPALIANS

4 percent. On the wedding pages of the winter and spring of 1997, by contrast, 40 percent of the ceremonies are Jewish, only 17 percent are Episcopalian, 15 percent are Catholic, 13 percent are other Protestant, and 15 percent are non-religious or non-denominational.

Not to sound too much like Charles Murray or anything, but the rise of the cognitive elite has meant that a lot fewer Episcopalian weddings get featured in the *Times*.

Or maybe it is appropriate to sound like Murray, because in *The Bell Curve* he and co-author Richard Herrnstein describe the phenomenon that is an important cause of the transformation of the American elite. In their relatively non-controversial first chapter, Murray and Herrnstein consider the Harvard freshman class of 1952. The young men of that class were largely white and Christian, from the East Side of Manhattan, the Main Line of Philadelphia, and the most exclusive prep schools. Applicants whose fathers had gone to Harvard had a 90 percent admission rate. The average verbal SAT score was 583, good but not stratospheric.

Then they jump ahead to the freshman class of 1960. The average verbal SAT score for that group was 678, and the math score was 695—these are stratospheric scores. The average Harvard freshman in 1952 would have placed in the bottom 10 percent of Harvard freshmen in 1960. And the 1960 class was much more national. Smart kids from Queens or Iowa, who wouldn't have applied to Harvard eight years earlier, were now applying and getting in. Without much muss or fuss, Harvard had transformed itself from a school catering to the northeastern social elite to a school reaching more of the brightest kids from around the country. And as Murray and Herrnstein show, elite colleges around the country followed Harvard's lead.

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Say you were a Harvard freshman in 1960. You graduate in 1964 and start having kids in, say, 1967. Your kids grow up, and when they are 25 or 30, they start getting married. That brings us to the 1990s, the decade in which we see in the wedding announcements of the *Times* the emergence of the second-generation cognitive elite, or CE—a class of adults who have spent their entire lives in a distinctively meritocratic culture. These are the Résumé Gods.

You've heard of old money. Well, now we see old brains. The parents of men and women in this cohort went to the best schools, even though growing up they didn't have the best social connections, and then they took part in the great graduate school explosion of the 1960s. They were the pioneers of the information-age economy, going into media, communications, the academy. Their children grew up surrounded by books and educational toys rather than martinis and golf clubs. They grew up in an ethos of meritocratic ambition rather than aristocratic noblesse oblige. Their parents work with words, not machinery. Indeed, on the wedding pages of the 1970s many of the fathers of the bride or groom work in manufacturing, as plant managers and owners. Now the majority of parents have the same sort of information-age jobs as their children.

Surveying the wedding pages of the winter and spring of 1997, we find that 84 percent of the couples represent second-generation CE (or better) marrying people of similar pedigree. For example, Elizabeth Barrett, whose mother is a research scientist in gerontology at Columbia and whose father is a neurologist, married Alexander Gadd, whose mother is a psychotherapist and whose father is president of North River Press in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. The new Mrs. Gadd is a senior production manager at ABC, and Mr. Gadd is education and technology manager for the Digital Exchange Group, an Internet development firm. In this sample there were no instances of non-professional parents on both sides of the wedding. A machinist's son marrying a car dealer's daughter does not make it into the pages of the *New York Times*.

And what are the peculiarities of this New Class (as conservative intellectuals call it)? The first thing to note about its members is that they marry old. In their twenties they put in the massive hours required to get their careers moving. Having built up some momentum, they can pair up. Counting only those celebrating their first marriages, the average age of the brides is 29, and for grooms it is 32. In only 10 percent of the cases was the bride older than the groom.

The second thing we notice is that while magna cum laudes often marry other magnas, you rarely see a magna marry a summa cum laude. The tension in such a marriage would be too great. In April, for example, Alina Garcia, who graduated magna cum laude from Georgetown, married Carlos Lapuerta, who graduated magna cum laude from Harvard. Even though they went to different schools, the shared magnas suffice to bring them together.

The defining characteristic of the people mentioned on the page, for our purposes (and no doubt for theirs), is their profession. In our sample, 18 percent of the individuals are doctors, 23 percent are lawyers, 23 percent are in media or communications, and 28 percent are in finance of one sort or another.

We can break this elite down into two large classes: predators and nurturers. Predators are the lawyers, traders, marketers—the folks who deal with money or who spend their professional lives negotiating or competing or otherwise being tough and screwing others. Nurturers tend to be liberal-arts majors. They become academics, foundation officials, writers, and artists—the people who deal with information and ideas or who spend their time cooperating with others or facilitating something. Doctors appear to be nurturers, but in reality we know better, so in weighing the ratios of predators to nurturers, we simply set medical people aside.

In my 1996-97 sample, 55 percent of the weddings consist of two predators marrying each other. For example, Erika Smith,

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a vice president at Chase Manhattan Bank, married William Brewer, a partner at the law firm of Winston & Strawn. Or Sarah Jaffe, who graduated magna cum laude from Harvard and went on to become a product manager at Nabisco, married Richard S. Eisert, who graduated magna cum laude from Harvard and went on to become an associate at the law firm of Patterson, Belknap, Webb & Tyler.

Twenty-one percent of the weddings on the *Times* page consist of two nurturers marrying each other. For example, Gita van Heerden married Eckart Forster. She is a former Fulbright scholar who is a lecturer in humanities at Stanford. He is a former Rhodes scholar who teaches right next door in the philosophy department.

Some 34 percent of the cases are mixed marriages, in which a predator marries a nurturer. In this group the predator is almost always the groom. For example, Patrick Kaye, who graduated from Duke and received an MBA from the University of Chicago, is a financial consultant with CFX Inc. He is marrying Lori McKenna, who received a master's degree in social work from Columbia and now teaches fourth grade at the Authors' Workshop School, an alternative public school in the Bronx. One wonders how such interfaith marriages work out.

The full significance of the predator-nurturer split becomes clear in the Vows column of the *Times*'s wedding page, written each week by Lois Smith Brady and featuring the nuptials of people we like. These weddings are always a total rejection of both the stiff, formal ceremonies customary among the WASP elite and the gaudy, overdone affairs that are the hallmark of the nouveau riche. (Indeed, the New Class defines itself by its opposition to these more dull-witted classes.)

The Vows column divides pretty neatly between predator weddings and nurturer weddings. The predator weddings feature bond traders or lawyers who always seem to have met each other while competing in a marathon, and they tend to spend their honeymoons with Sherpas in the Himalayas. Though they are athletic on the weekend and ferocious competitors in the workplace, they always have a more thoughtful side as well—well-rounded creatures that they are.

Daniel Delaney is a health-systems manager at Abbott Laboratories who spends his weekends at his family's farm in Windham, New York, reading the narrative poems of Robert W. Stevens, who chronicled the lives of early American woodsmen. As one of Mr. Delaney's friends explained to the Vows column, "Everybody in New York leaves on the weekends"—savor that *everybody*—"they go to the Hamptons, the Jersey shore, Newport, Millbrook. And then you've got the woods crowd, the plaid lumberjack crowd, and that's Dan." Mr. Delaney recently married Brigitte Devine, director of advertising and marketing for Emanuel/Emanuel Ungaro, a clothing line. They met at a Lincoln Center dinner and began swapping tales about skeet shooting, skiing, and scuba diving. Mr. Delaney proposed by handing Ms. Devine a diving mask with an engagement ring inside. Their honeymoon: a helicopter tour of mountain villages in Venezuela.

On the other hand, Cecile Rossant and Christian Niemitz held a second wedding in late March (after a civil ceremony months before), in what has to stand as one of the classic nurturer events of all time. The wedding took place in the living room of the bride's father, an architect, and mother, the New York *Daily News* food columnist. The couple made their entrance encased in a silver Mylar box the size of an elevator, which rolled slowly across the room (and which they designed and built themselves). They began the ceremony in white jumpsuits but zipped out of them after the procession to reveal flowing costumes. They made their vows with posters. "I will surprise you every morning," the bride promised while holding up a poster of an egg tumbling out of a blue book. The ceremony reached its climax when the couple took off their jackets and revealed small packs on their backs, which inflated to become giant red lips. They then turned back-to-back and "kissed."

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The one elite social type almost entirely missing from the *Times* wedding page is the entrepreneur: almost no individuals who have started companies appear—until they feel the need to announce their second or third marriages. The young Résumé Gods tend not to engage in high-risk professional activities. By excelling in high school, college, and graduate schools, these young men and women can become doctors or lawyers or professors, careers that offer relatively predictable paths to prosperity.

Moreover, members of this elite tend to be temperamentally, perhaps even hormonally, suited to low-risk work. They did well between the crucial ages of 15 and 23, when others were rebelling, feeling alienated, flying off in self-destructive directions, or just basically exploring their baser natures. These members of the cognitive elite were getting good grades, impressing teachers and extracurricular advisors, preparing for the SATs, and doing everything adults want teenagers to do.

Members of this group work and play well with others. They tend not to have the fierce spirit of independence that makes people entrepreneurs (and makes them insufferable in large organizations). If, on the other hand, you are a bad kid as an adolescent, those professions are probably closed off to you. That suspension in high school caused the Yale admissions office to send you a thin envelope, and those Cs in English at Ohio State turned off the medical schools. If bad kids are going to make something of themselves, they have to enter the high-risk professions. They literally have to make something of *themselves*.

The members of the cognitive elite will work their way up into law partnerships or top jobs at the *New York Times*, but they probably won't enter the billionaire ranks. The real wealth will go to the risk-taking entrepreneurs who grew up in middle- or lower-middle-class homes and got no help from their non-professional parents when they went off to college. As Thomas Stanley and William Danko report in their new book, *The Millionaire Next Door*, there is an inverse relationship between receiving financial help for college from one's parents and going on to become a millionaire. Self-made individuals take the biggest risks and go on to make the biggest fortunes. Only 20 percent of millionaires, Stanley and Danko point out, inherited their wealth.

The people on the *New York Times* wedding page won't make $4 million a year like the guy who started a chain of erotic car washes. They'll have to make do with, say, $1.2 million if they make partner of their law firms. Maybe even less. The cognitive elite have more status but less money than the millionaire entrepreneurs, and their choices as consumers reflect their unceasing desire to demonstrate their social superiority to people richer than themselves.

Finally, I confess that I'm one of the devotees of the wedding page who lament the absence of a divorce page. It's fascinating to see these marriages at the dawn, but as someone once wrote, this is the happy stage when all families are alike. It would be even more fun to read a divorce page enlivened by the endlessly various human drama of CE crackups. A typical item might go something like this:

"Priscilla Jones, who graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Stanford and received a law degree from Harvard, is running off to Mexico with her lesbian lover, Mary Stern, a professor of sports medicine at Mt. Sinai Medical College. Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Stern are leaving husbands who between them possess four master's degrees, two PhDs, and a Neiman fellowship. Mr. James Jones, whose father is a partner at Winston & Strawn, is accused by Mrs. Jones of committing adultery with a series of salesclerks at the Barnes & Noble on upper Broadway. Mr. Jones, a professor of French at Columbia University, denies the allegations and claims that he only began lecturing in adult education programs to pay for Mrs. Jones's ongoing liposuction treatments. The custody hearings for the three children—who attend Dalton, Trinity, and Collegiate—will be September 14, Justice Myra Seymour presiding."

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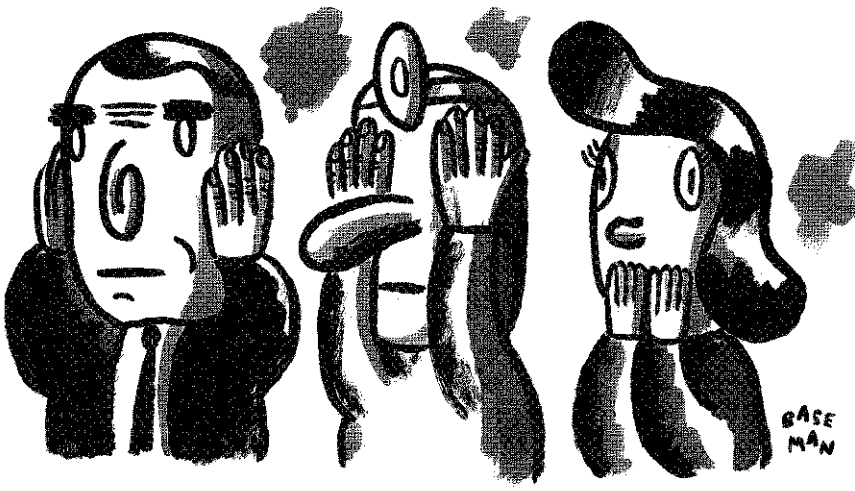
Oh, to be in **England**

The Rush from Judgment

Theodore Dalrymple



GARY BASEMAN

Not long ago I asked a patient of mine how he would describe his own character. He paused for a moment, as if savoring a delicious morsel.

"I take people as they come," he replied in due course. "I'm very nonjudgmental."

As his two roommates had recently decamped, stealing his prize possessions and leaving him with ruinous debts to pay, his neutrality toward human character seemed not generous but stupid, a kind of prophylactic against learning from experience. Yet nonjudgmentalism has become so universally accepted as the highest, indeed the only, virtue that he spoke of his own character as if pinning a medal for exceptional merit on his own chest.

That same week I was consulted by another patient who had experienced even worse consequences of nonjudgmentalism, though this time not entirely her own. Her life had been that of the modern slum dweller: three children by different fathers, none of whom supported her in any way and the last of whom was a vicious, violent drunk. She had separated from him by fleeing with their two-year-old to a hostel for battered women; soon afterward she found herself an apartment whose whereabouts he did not know.

Unfortunately, sometime later she was admitted to the hospital for an operation. As she had no one to whom she could entrust the child, she turned to Social Services for help. The social workers insisted, against her desperate pleas, that the child should stay with his biological father while she was in the hospital. They were deaf to her argument that he was an unsuitable guardian, even for two weeks: he would regard the child as an encumbrance, an intolerable interference with his daily routine of drinking, whoring, and fighting. They said it was wrong to pass judgment on a man like this and threatened her with dire consequences if she did not agree to their plan. So the two-year-old was sent to his father as they demanded.

Within the week he and his new girlfriend had killed the child by swinging him against the wall repeatedly by his ankles and smashing his head. At this somewhat belated juncture, society did reluctantly make a judgment: the murderers both received life sentences.

Of course, the rush to nonjudgment is in part a reaction against the cruel or unthinking application of moral codes in the past. A friend of mine recently discovered a woman in her nineties who had lived as a "patient" in a large lunatic asylum for more than 70 years but whose only illness—as far as he was able to discover—had been to give birth to an illegitimate child in the 1920s. No one, surely, would wish to see the return of such monstrous incarceration and cavalier destruction of women's lives: but it does not follow from this that mass illegitimacy (33 percent in the country as a whole, 70 percent in my hospital) is a good thing, or at least not a bad

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thing. Judgment is precisely that—*judgment*. It is not the measure of every action by an infallible and rigid instrument.

Apologists for nonjudgmentalism point, above all, to its supposed quality of compassion. A man who judges others will sometimes condemn them and therefore deny them aid and assistance: whereas the man who refuses to judge excludes no one from his all-embracing compassion. He never asks where his fellowman's suffering comes from, whether it be self-inflicted or no: for whatever its source, he sympathizes with it and succors the sufferer.

The housing department of my city holds fast to this doctrine. It allocates scarce public housing, it says in its self-congratulatory leaflets, solely on the basis of need (give or take a nepotistic connection or two—after all, even the nonjudgmental are human). It never asks how the need arose in the first place: it is there to care, not to condemn.

In practice, of course, things are a little different. It is true that the housing department makes no judgments as to the deserts of the applicants for its largesse, but that is precisely why it cannot express any human compassion whatever. Its estimation of need is mathematical, based on a perverse algebra of sociopathology. To return to the case of my patient whose child had been murdered: she was driven from her home by her neighbors, who felt that she was responsible for the death of her child and therefore acted as good, outraged citizens by twice attempting to burn down her apartment. Thereafter she found cheap lodgings in a house where there also lodged a violent drug addict, who forced his attentions upon her. When she applied to the housing department for help, it refused her on the grounds that she was already adequately housed, in the sense of having four walls around her and a roof over her head (and it would be wholly wrong to stigmatize drug addicts as undesirable neighbors), and also because she had no young dependents—her only young dependent having been murdered and therefore not part of the equation. Stones might have wept at my patient's predicament, but not the housing department: it is far too nonjudgmental to do so.

Curiously enough, my patient was perfectly able—with a little encouragement—to accept that her misfortunes did not come entirely out of the blue, that she had contributed to them by her own conduct and was therefore not a pure or immaculate victim. Taking the line of least resistance, as she had done throughout her life, she had consented to have a child by a man whom she knew to be thoroughly unsuitable as a parent. Indeed, she had known him to be violent and drunken even before she went to live with him, but she still found him attractive; and she lived in a society that promotes its own version of the Sermon on the Mount—Sufficient unto the day is the attraction thereof. She had learned now from experience (better late than never)—which she could never have done had she refrained from making judgments about both herself and others. As a result, she had rejected another violent lover, abjured her own habitual drunkenness, and decided to go to college.

In the clinic, of course, a kind of nonjudgmentalism does and should hold sway: doctors ought never to refuse treatment on the grounds of moral deficiency. Moses Maimonides, the twelfth-century rabbi and doctor, wrote: "May I never see in the patient anything but a fellow creature in pain"—surely a noble aspiration, if somewhat difficult of achievement in practice.

But medicine is not just the passive contemplation of suffering: it is the attempt, by no means always successful, to alleviate it. And it cannot have escaped the attention of doctors that much modern suffering has a distinct flavor of self-infliction. I am not talking now of the physical illnesses that derive from habits such as smoking, but rather of the chronic suffering caused by not knowing how to live, or rather by imagining that life can be lived as an entertainment, as an extended video, as nothing but a series of pleasures of the moment. The whirligig of time brings in its revenges—at least in a cold climate such as ours.

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If the doctor has a duty to relieve the suffering of his patients, he must have some idea where that suffering comes from, and this involves the retention of judgment, including moral judgment. And if, as far as he can tell in good faith, the misery of his patients derives from the way they live, he has a duty to tell them so—which often involves a more or less explicit condemnation of their way of life as completely incompatible with a satisfying existence. By avoiding the issue, the doctor is not being kind to his patients; he is being cowardly. Moreover, by refusing to place the onus on the patients to improve their lot, he is likely to mislead them into supposing that he has some purely technical or pharmacological answer to their problems, thus helping to perpetuate them.

For example, I am consulted at least once or twice a day—week in, week out; year in, year out—by women who complain of anxiety and depression, whose biographies contain obvious explanations for these unpleasant feelings. The women have often endured more than one violent sexual relationship, sometimes as many as four in succession, and have more than one young child to bring up. While they fear the loneliness of managing on their own, without help from another adult, they have come to the conclusion that all men are unreliable, even psychopathic. They are in an apparently insoluble dilemma: are they better off battered or alone?

Aided by a few simple questions, it doesn't take them long to analyze their situation, though at the outset they invariably ascribe their unhappiness to bad luck or fate. Such is the power of self-deception that even the most obvious considerations escape them. A few weeks ago a woman came to see me complaining of having been miserable and dissatisfied with her life for 20 years. Her husband treated her like a slave, and when he was not obeyed, he became aggressive, either throwing things about the room, smashing windows, or beating her.

"Why don't you leave him?" I asked.

"I feel sorry for him."

"Why?"

"Well, because he's not very bright, doctor, and he doesn't know how to read or write. He couldn't manage on his own; he can't do anything for himself. I even have to dial the telephone for him because he can't read the numbers."

"Does he work?"

"Yes, he's always worked."

"What does he do?"

"He's in charge of security at the Hall"—a large Elizabethan stately home on the outskirts of the city, owned by the municipality.

"How many people work in the

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security department there?" I asked her.

"Sixteen."

"You mean, every time he has to make a telephone call there, he asks one of his staff to do it for him because he can't read the numbers? Or every time he receives a letter, he has to have someone read it out to him?"

My patient looked at me wide-eyed. Obvious as this was, she hadn't thought of it.

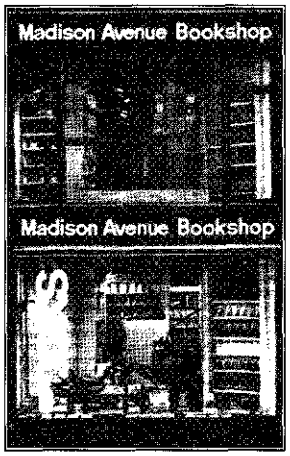
"It's not very likely, is it, that such a man would be made the boss," I added.

She had failed, through cowardice and self-indulgence, to think about the clear discrepancy between her husband's career and his supposed helplessness at home: for had she recognized it, she could no longer think of herself as a victim (with all the psychological comfort that victimhood brings) but rather as the co-author of her own misery. She wanted to avoid a painful dilemma: either to accept the situation as it was or to do something about it.

After two more conversations with me, she did something about it. She delivered an ultimatum to her husband: either he must modify his behavior or she would leave him. Further, if ever he laid a finger upon her again, she would call the police and press charges against him. Since then he has behaved and even done what for 20 years she believed him incapable of doing: he made a cup of tea for himself. Meanwhile she has gone to art classes instead of imprisoning herself in their apartment, awaiting his arbitrary orders.

This patient had only one violent man to contend with; many of my patients have had a succession of them. I ask where they met them, and almost without exception it was in a bar or a nightclub when they were both at a loose end, a previous relationship having broken up the week, or even the day, before. I ask what they had in common, apart from loss and loneliness. The invariable answer: sexual attraction and the desire for a good night out.

These are not contemptible in themselves, of course, but as the foundation of long-term relationships and parenthood, they are a little thin and soon wear even thinner. I ask what other interests the women and their lovers have in common, and invariably there are none. The day-to-day flux is their whole world: a little shopping, a little cooking, a little tidying up, a lot of television, a visit to the social security office, and a few hours in the pub while the money lasts. This aimless routine soon palls but nevertheless remains a subject for continual and acrimonious disagreement. Moreover, there is no pressure—either moral pressure from the community or economic pressure from the system of taxation and social security benefits—to keep couples



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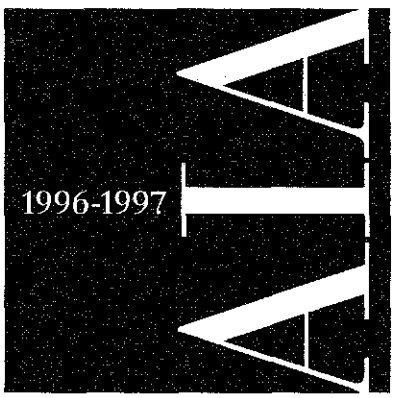

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together. Before long, neither necessity nor desire cements relationships—only inertia, punctuated by violence. For the violent man, to have a woman trembling in fear of him is his only guarantee of personal significance.

But how, the women ask, are they to meet men who are not like this? How is a woman to find someone who will not exploit her alternately as a meal ticket and an object for the relief of sexual tension, who will not spend his own social security money in a single night out and then demand to be given hers as well, despite the fact that this money is needed to feed the children? How is she to find a man who will actually provide something in return, such as companionship and unconditional support?

The answer necessarily involves an examination of how they have lived, from their childhood onward. For if, as I contend and they agree, it is necessary to have interests in common in order to achieve some depth in a relationship, how are such interests generated in the first place?

The woeful inadequacy of their upbringing, education, and outlook becomes apparent to them, perhaps for the first time.

"What are you interested in?" I ask. The question comes like a warning shot.

"Well . . . nothing, really," they reply. They recognize the unsatisfactory nature of their answer—which is all too truthful—at once.

"Did you try hard at school?"

"No."

"What did you do instead?"

"Messed around, like everyone else."

Their peers discouraged, sometimes by physical violence, those few who showed some inclination to work. To have resisted the prevailing ethos would have required exceptional courage, as well as parental backing, which was invariably missing. It was better to go along with the crowd and enjoy the illicit pleasures of the moment. It didn't really matter: after all, there would always be enough to eat, a roof over one's head, and a television to watch, thanks to subventions from the state. Besides which, it is a truth universally acknowledged in the slums that there is nothing to be gained by individual effort, since the world is so unjustly organized. And in the absence of either fear or hope, only the present moment has any reality: you do what is most amusing, or least boring, at each passing moment.

In the absence of an interest or career, motherhood seems a good choice: only later does it become clear just how entrapping it is, especially when the father—predictably, but not predictedly—takes no share of parental duties.

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With no experience or knowledge of the worlds of science, art, or literature, and deprived of the sheer necessity to earn their subsistence, my patients are rich in nothing but time on their hands, and so they embark upon the *Liaisons Dangereuses* of the slums. But the relationships in which they thus embroil themselves are incapable for long of sustaining the burden placed upon them, and the descent into misery, drudgery, squalor, and fear is almost immediate.

In their late twenties the most intelligent among them say to me, "There's something missing in my life, but I don't know what it is." They remind me of the young people I met behind the Iron Curtain, who had never known any other life than that under the Communists, who knew little of the outside world and yet knew that their way of life was both abnormal and intolerable.

My patients medicalize both their own misery and the terrible conduct of their violent lovers, a way of explaining their existential dissatisfaction that absolves them of responsibility. It takes little time, however, to disabuse them of their misconceptions, and the fact that I am often able to predict from very near the outset of our consultation how their lovers have behaved toward them astonishes them. Last week I saw a patient who had taken an overdose after her boyfriend beat her up. Our dialogue followed a set pattern.

"And, of course, he sometimes grabs you round the throat and squeezes and tries to strangle you?" I ask.

"How did you know, doctor?"

"Because I've heard it practically every day for the last seven years. And you have marks on your neck."

"He doesn't do it *all* the time, doctor." This is the universal extenuation offered.

"And, of course, he apologizes afterward and tells you it won't happen again. And you believe him."

"Yes. I really think he needs help, doctor."

"Why do you say that?"

"Well, when he does it, he changes completely; he becomes another person; his eyes stare; it's like he has a fit. I really think he can't help it; he's got no control over it."

"Would he do it in front of me, here, now, in this room?"

"No, of course not."

"Then he *can* help it, can't he?"

The woman's desire to avoid a painful dilemma—love him and be beaten, or leave him and miss him—prevented her from asking herself the very obvious question as to why the "fits" happened only in the privacy of their apartment. Suddenly, inescapably, the responsibility for alleviating her misery became hers: she had to make a choice.

"But I love him, doctor."

The triumph of the doctrine of the sovereignty of sentiment over sense would have delighted the Romantics, no doubt, but it has promoted an unconscionable amount of misery.

"Your boyfriend is unlikely to change. He strangles you because he enjoys it and gets a feeling of power from doing so. It makes him feel big: 'I strangle her, but she still loves me, so I must be really wonderful.' If you leave him, he'll find someone else to strangle within the week."

"But it's difficult, doctor."

"I didn't say it was easy; I said it was necessary. There's no reason why what is necessary should also be easy. But you can't expect doctors to make you happy while your lover is still strangling you, or to make him stop strangling you. Neither of these things is possible. You must make a choice. There is simply no way round it."

To tell such a patient that she is responsible, both practically and morally, for her own life is not to deny her help; it is to tell her the truth. To force her to face her complicity in her misery is not to abandon her to her fate. On many occasions I have put such women in touch with lawyers, I have found them safe accommodation, I have found them places in colleges.

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Nor do I demand an immediate decision; what has taken years to develop is rarely undone in an hour or two. But I stick to the fundamental truth: that no doctor, no social worker, no policeman, can improve the quality of such a woman's life unless she is willing to forgo whatever gratification she derives from her violent boyfriend. There is no painless way of resolving the dilemma.

In almost all cases the women return a few weeks later much improved in their mood. The love they thought they felt for their tormentors has evaporated; they find it difficult in retrospect to distinguish it from the fear they felt.

What should we do now? they ask me.

How am I to answer them? Should I pretend to an agnosticism about what might constitute a better life for them and their children? Should I pretend that a promiscuous granting of their favors to the first man they meet in a pub is as good as taking a little care over such matters? Wouldn't that be the ultimate betrayal?

I advise them that their first responsibility is to do everything in their power to prevent their children from following in their footsteps; they should try to open horizons to them beyond the miserable and sordid ones visible from the slums. This will involve spending time with them, taking an interest in their schoolwork, learning to say no to them when the occasion arises, and above all, ensuring that they never again witness scenes of domestic violence.

As for themselves, they should try to go to college: for even if it fails to render them more employable, they will at least gain a sense of achievement and possibly an enduring interest. And if that means they have to break the rules governing social security—which decree that they should be theoretically available for work and therefore not engaged in full-time education—well, *I* am not going to inform the authorities, who (it seems) prefer their dependents utterly passive.

They often take my suggestions. (One of my patients, beaten for 20 years, has since become a nurse, and many others work as assistants in nursing homes, the desire to help others being a corollary of their desire to help themselves.) I am probably the only person they have ever met to whom the violence of their lives is not as natural as the air they breathe but the result of human choices; I am the only person who has ever suggested to them that they can behave otherwise than they do behave.

It would be vain to suggest that this approach works in every case. Judgment is necessary, too, in selecting the cases; there are those who are too old, too psychologically fragile, or too young to bear the pain of accepting partial responsibility for their own misery. Alas, there is a period during the downward spiral of self-destruction when little can be done, as if self-destruction has a natural course of its own. Just as alcoholics and drug addicts may take years to accept first, that they are addicted, and second, that addiction is neither an excuse for their conduct nor a fate imposed upon them by circumstances, so the willful self-destruction that I see around me often runs a prolonged course, thanks to the powers of human self-deception.

It can rarely be nipped in the bud. For example, in the week in which the woman whose child had been murdered consulted me, two young women came to my notice, neither of whom gave any thought to the future or to the past, and both of whom sleepwalked through the present.

The first was barely 16, a white girl two months pregnant by a Muslim burglar. She was covered in bruises. They had met when he burgled her house, where she had been left alone for the night by her single mother, with whom she fought like a cat and a dog tied up in a sack over the time she should come home at night from clubs and discotheques (her mother suggesting the abominably early hour of midnight). The burglar asked her to come with him, and she did; thenceforth he locked her up, never allowed her out of the apartment, forbade all contact with others, beat her black and blue,

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kicked her regularly in the stomach, demanded her conversion to Islam (he himself was a drunk), and in general expected her to be his slave.

When he went into the hospital for a small operation—the repair of a tendon in his arm, injured in the course of housebreaking—she had an opportunity to escape. I offered her every facility to do so, from a safe house to the services of a lawyer paid for by the public purse.

"I can't leave him," she said. "I love him, and he said he'd kill himself if I leave him."

I know from experience that such a man might take an overdose as a form of emotional blackmail: the vast majority of male overdoses in my ward are of men who have beaten their women—the overdoses serve the dual function of blackmailing the women into remaining with them and of presenting themselves as the victims rather than the perpetrators of their own violence. I also know from experience that the Muslim burglar would never actually kill himself. But when a young woman says she fears the suicide of her lover, she is in effect saying that she will not yet leave him, and nothing will induce her to change her mind.

While the Muslim burglar remained in the hospital, she appeared every day, dressed in Punjabi costume, to tend her tormentor-lover, to bring him his Indian delicacies and all the little comforts he lacked.

The second young patient was a black girl, now age 17, whose parents first knew of her liaison with a white boy a year older than she when her teacher brought her home from school at the age of 14, having been beaten up by the boy in the schoolyard. A few months later she gave birth to his child, and they went to live together. (No doubt future social historians will find the contradiction between our concern about sexual abuse, on the one hand, and our connivance at and indifference to precocious sexual activity, on the other, as curious as we find the contrast between Victorian sexual prudery and the vast size of the Victorian demimonde.) Fatherhood did not improve the young man's conduct: he broke her jaw, fractured her ribs, partially strangled her, punched her regularly, and used her head to break a closed window before pushing her out of it altogether. He did not work, took her money for drink, went to spend nights with other girls, and demanded his meals be ready for him to suit his convenience.

I offered her, too, every opportunity to leave, every legal protection it was possible to provide, but her cup of bitterness, like the first girl's, was not yet full ("It's all right for you; you don't love him!") and therefore not yet ready to be drained. All one could do was offer to help whenever she was ready to ask for it.

Neither of these young women was deficient in intelligence, far from it; and in a few years, when they appear again in my hospital, as inevitably they will, they'll be ready to examine the source of their suffering, having wasted so much time. I hope someone will have the courage and compassion to guide them to that source: for only if the veil of self-deception is torn from their eyes can they improve the quality of their lives.

Experience has taught me that it is wrong and cruel to suspend judgment, that nonjudgmentalism is at best indifference to the suffering of others, at worst a disguised form of sadism. How can one respect people as members of the human race unless one holds them to a standard of conduct and truthfulness? How can people learn from experience unless they are told that they can and should change? One doesn't demand of laboratory mice that they do better: but man is not a mouse, and I can think of no more contemptuous way of treating people than to ascribe to them no more responsibility than such mice.

In any case, nonjudgmentalism is not really nonjudgmental. It is the judgment that, in the words of a bitter Argentinean tango, "*todo es igual, nada es mejor*": everything is the same, nothing is better. This is as barbaric and untruthful a doctrine as has yet emerged from the fertile mind of man.

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Letters

Demon in the Classroom?

To the editor:
I agree with Sol Stern ("How Teachers' Unions Handcuff Schools," Spring 1997) on two basic points: the public schools are in trouble, and "no school reform can accomplish much if it does not focus on the quality of the basic unit of education—that human interaction between an adult and a group of children that we call teaching." You would think that these beliefs would lead Mr. Stern to write an article about—or just give a mention to—academic standards, discipline, class size, the hiring and promotion of qualified teachers, or improvements in teacher education and professional development. But no. Mr. Stern lives in a much simpler world, and it has a demon: the teachers' unions, which control the schools (not to mention the American political system) and are the root of all educational evil.

If Mr. Stern were right, school districts without collective bargaining for teachers would be educational utopias. There happen to be such places: most of the Southern states. But contrary to Mr. Stern's fantasy, student achievement in these states continues to be among the lowest in the nation. If Mr. Stern were right, how would you explain the accomplishments of, for example, the Bronx High School of Science or Stuyvesant, where teachers work under the

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same collective bargaining agreement that supposedly causes low student achievement in the rest of New York City? And if Mr. Stern were right, school systems in Japan, Germany, Sweden, and France—where unions are even more "powerful" than ours—would be educational disasters. But their students typically perform better than ours do.

The fact is, Mr. Stern is dead wrong. Sure, teachers' unions, along with everyone else involved in schooling, have to look at themselves and ask what they are doing that may contribute to our educational problems and how they can make the necessary changes. And both the American Federation of Teachers and United Federation of Teachers do. But we don't run schools of education or hire, evaluate, or promote teachers, let alone administrators. We're not the reason academic standards became so low and curricula so incoherent; the AFT is widely credited as being in the forefront of the standards movement, and the UFT encouraged and supports Chancellor Rudy Crew's push for standards. And we're certainly not the reason too many schools are disorderly; we've been trying for years to get school districts to adopt, and fairly enforce, discipline codes and to run decent alternative schools for violent and chronically disruptive youngsters.

And no, Mr. Stern, we don't write our own collective bargaining agreements. If we did, teachers would have the working conditions, preparation, and support to spend all their time focusing on helping their students to achieve.

Sandra Feldman
President
American Federation of Teachers
United Federation of Teachers (NYC)
Washington, D.C.

To the editor:
Three cheers for Sol Stern's insightful article. The piece clearly and convincingly describes how the NEA and AFT have been the perennial and primary obstacle to meaningful educational reform.

Since the article appeared, both unions have reached a crossroads. In a recent speech laden with institutional self-criticism, Bob Chase, president of the NEA, declared that the union needed to "reinvent itself." And the recent death of Albert Shanker, president of the AFT for 22 years, has created a huge void for the organization to fill.

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Will the unions truly change? Here are three benchmarks to consider: (1) Will they take formal, tangible actions to make sure that incompetent teachers can be removed from the classroom more easily? (2) Will they accept school-choice arrangements? (3) Will they cut back their political staffs and stop focusing on such non-educational issues as "Indian remains"?

By examining these and other issues a year from now, we will know whether the unions are truly committed to change—or intent on more of the same.

Robert W. Kasten
Alexis de Tocqueville Institution
Arlington, Va.

Sol Stern responds:
Significantly, Sandra Feldman does not challenge any of the specifics in my article, including the facts that many of her union's teachers work as little as 1,000 hours a year, that they obtain their jobs based on seniority rather than merit, and that it is virtually impossible to fire them when they are incompetent. Instead, she indulges in an old debater's trick: things may be bad here, but it's worse in the South, where unions are weak. Then there are all those high-performing countries like France and Japan, which have strong unions.

Well, the last time I checked, Southern states like Texas and Tennessee were doing much better on school reform and improvement than New York. As for the foreign countries, France's education system is falling apart even faster than ours, and the Japanese are doing a lot of for-profit schooling. And does anyone really believe that the performance of New York's Stuyvesant and Bronx Science high schools is due to their hard-working unionized teachers rather than their students?

Fortunately, there is now some serious empirical research on the impact of teacher unionism. Caroline Minter Hobby, a professor of economics at Harvard, has examined data covering 20 years from every school district in the U.S. Her conclusion from the statistics: "Teachers' unions do get more money for schools and for themselves, but the benefits do not seem to trickle down to the students. Students do worse with unions."

My thanks to former senator Kasten, who raises the right questions for the teachers' unions.

The Worldly Dagger John

To the editor:
William J. Stern is to be congratulated for giving Archbishop John Hughes his due ("How Dagger John Saved New York's Irish," Spring 1997). Yet Mr. Stern's account has some glaring omissions, as well as several factual errors.

In describing Hughes's role during the 1863 Draft Riots, Mr. Stern has the archbishop summoning "the leaders of the rebellion to meet with him." After an appropriate tongue-lashing, they "went back to their neighborhoods, and the violence melted away." But there was no organized cabal of leaders. On the fifth day of the riot, Hughes spoke from his balcony to a crowd gathered in the street. By this time, the army had regained the upper hand. The notion that all it took to end the Draft Riots was a few words from Hughes echoes the worst sort of nativist nonsense.

While correct in his appraisal of the crucial role played by Catholic nuns, Stern doesn't go far enough. As historian Maureen Fitzgerald has shown, the Catholic sisterhood developed a model of public assistance that departed from the prevailing Calvinist notion, which separated the poor into worthy (to be helped) and unworthy (to be ignored). These nuns created institutions that offered help solely on the basis of need. They also used their considerable clout with Irish-American politicians to direct government funding to private agencies.

Most curious of all is Mr. Stern's fleeting mention of Tammany Hall. A glance at George Washington Plunkitt's *Very Plain Talks on Very Practical Politics* will call to mind the use that the Irish made of public jobs and public budgets. Not by mere accident or moral reform did it turn out that by the 1880s, as Mr. Stern reports, "Three-quarters of the police force was

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Letters

Irish." Irish contractors and saloonkeepers benefited mightily from Tammany's largesse. It could be argued that no ethnic group before or since has used the fisc to such advantage.

Archbishop Hughes may well have been the Moses of New York's Irish. But his people's journey out of the wilderness was more than a story of moral uplift. It had a distinctly material side. To pretend otherwise is to distort history, not clarify it.

Peter Quinn
Hastings-on-Hudson, N.Y.

William J. Stern responds:
Contrary to what Mr. Quinn says, I spent most of my article demonstrating that Archbishop Hughes did not separate the moral from the material. Hughes thought that the values he promoted—hard work, education, personal responsibility in sexual behavior, and moderation in the use of alcohol—were vital for salvation, but he also knew that they would advance the material well-being of his flock.

Hughes instinctively understood that religion shapes culture and that culture plays the dominant role in determining material well-being. Modern liberals do not understand this truism, which is why, some 30 years after the launch of the Great Society, so many of the social problems that it set out to solve through material means alone have grown immeasurably worse.

I'm afraid Mr. Quinn crosses into revisionism when he implies that Tammany Hall played a significant role in the material advancement of the New York Irish. In Hughes's time, government at every level was a modest affair. Sources of public revenue were few—recall that the income tax did not yet exist—and there were not many public jobs, much less the vast network of redistributive programs so familiar to us today. Irish saloonkeepers benefited from the patronage of their countrymen and Irish contractors from a growing, vibrant New York economy—not from Tammany Hall largesse.

As for lesser points, I am surprised that Mr. Quinn questions Hughes's role in ending the 1863 Draft Riots. All the journalists of the era, including James Gordon Bennett, one of Hughes's great critics, gave him credit for being a peacemaker. Mr. Quinn is also wrong to imply that the Irish nuns of the day received anything but minuscule support from government.

The War Over Drugs

To the editor:
Theodore Dalrymple's essay "Don't Legalize Drugs" (Spring 1997) is provocative, entertaining, and at times on point in its critique of radical drug legalization proposals. It is also sophomoric in its philosophical analysis, disingenuous in its depiction of anti-prohibitionist arguments, and entirely indifferent to, if not ignorant of, the vast body of scholarship and analysis on drugs and drug policy.

Dr. Dalrymple attributes to me the claim that "prohibition, not the drugs themselves, is the problem." The attribution is incorrect. I have said that we confront not one but two sorts of drug problems: the harms associated with the misuse of drugs; and the harms that stem from our punitive prohibition policies. The ideal drug policy is the one that most successfully reduces both types of harms through a mix of private and public health measures, limited decriminalization, sensible regulations, and judicious preservation of the most necessary dimensions of drug prohibition.

Drug-policy alternatives range from the libertarian proposals of Thomas Szasz and Milton Friedman to the ruthless prohibitionism of ayatollahs, communist dictators, and totalitarian capitalists. In between lies a broad spectrum of policy options for reducing the negative consequences of both drug use and drug prohibition. Dr. Dalrymple and I agree, I think, that neither history nor social science can predict with confidence the consequences of total drug legalization.

There now exists a virtual consensus in the medical, scientific, and public health communities that making sterile syringes readily available to people un-

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able or unwilling to stop injecting drugs illegally helps reduce the spread of HIV and other infectious diseases without increasing drug abuse. Much the same is true of methadone treatment, which is widely acknowledged as the most effective means of reducing illicit heroin use and associated crime, disease, and death. Dr. Dalrymple ignores such evidence.

The Swiss government will soon release the results of a three-year, multi-city experiment in prescribing pharmaceutical heroin to longtime heroin users who have tried and failed to quit on at least two previous occasions. Preliminary reports indicate that the experiment has been strikingly successful in reducing illicit drug use (and not just of heroin) and criminal activity, and contributed greatly to improvements in health and overall well-being. Now the Dutch are about to follow suit, and it seems other Europeans will do likewise in coming years. Dr. Dalrymple assumes that there are no benefits of such programs "until the entire susceptible population is addicted and in a treatment program." That's clearly wrong. Initiatives that undermine black marketeers by providing legal sources of drugs may not eliminate "drug-related" crime and black-market incentives, but we know that they reduce such crimes and incentives.

"One of the most striking characteristics of drug users," Dr. Dalrymple asserts, "is their intense and tedious self-absorption; and their journeys into inner space are generally forays into inner vacuums." One can't help asking: Which drug users? Of which drugs? In which settings? Dr. Dalrymple's assertion is simply silly. Like much of his argument, it is a form of literary licentiousness almost entirely divorced from science, empirical evidence, and even common sense.

Ethan A. Nadelmann
The Lindesmith Center
New York, N.Y.

To the editor:
Theodore Dalrymple's article raises powerful arguments against sanctioning the use of now illicit drugs. It is thoughtful, entertaining, and brings a fresh perspective to proposals that have been debated all too frequently and tediously during the past several years.

As a periodic contributor to this debate, I was delighted by how ably Dr. Dalrymple marshals the main case against legalization. As he points out, illicit traffic can only be eliminated if all restrictions are scrapped, permitting the use of any substance by anyone of any age. Moreover, making drugs easily and legally available is bound to increase greatly not only consumption and addiction but also violence and other disordered behavior.

Dr. Dalrymple rightly notes the character-eroding quality of drug abuse and the dismal results of experiments in quasi-legalization in Liverpool and Zurich. Examining the convictions from which the legalization proposition derives, he rightly questions the viability of a culture "that makes publicly sanctioned self-indulgence its highest good."

Mitchell S. Rosenthal, M.D.
Phoenix House
New York, N.Y.

Theodore Dalrymple responds:
Mr. Nadelmann mistakes the purpose of my article. It was directed at the proposal that the free importation and distribution of heroin and cocaine should be permitted. I am glad that Mr. Nadelmann agrees with the "judicious preservation of the most necessary dimensions of drug prohibition" (that is, the maintenance of the status quo).

The success or otherwise of the less radical efforts that Mr. Nadelmann describes—from methadone treatment to the public distribution of heroin and its paraphernalia—does not fundamentally affect the question. But even here, there are fewer grounds for optimism than he suggests. For it does not follow from the fact that individuals benefit from such programs that society as a whole does. Indeed, an improvement in the functioning of individual addicts is perfectly compatible with rising drug addiction, crime, and methadone consumption—a model that fits historical reality better than Mr. Nadelmann's rosy picture.

The majority of addicts do not enter treatment programs at all.

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Letters

In Britain, a quarter of those who do are arrested annually, and 15 percent are imprisoned. As I know from experience, prisoners who are prescribed methadone continue to use illicitly obtained drugs. Most of them admit to me that they have regularly diverted at least some of their methadone onto the black market. At best, therefore, methadone replacement therapy will have a marginal effect on the situation as a whole. At worst, it will actually spread addiction.

Mr. Nadelmann omits two words from his letter: crack and cocaine. Here, truly, is the dog that did not bark. His silence on this subject is deafening, given its importance.

With Dr. Rosenthal's letter I am naturally in full agreement.

An Injustice to Freedman?

To the editor:
As a senior litigator with wide experience representing clients in the courts of New York City, including several before Justice Helen Freedman of State Supreme Court, I was shocked at the tone of Peter Hellman's article on the Legal Aid Society's suit against the city seeking humane treatment for the homeless ("Justice Freedman v. New York," Spring 1997). The article is little more than a personal attack, unworthy of a journal that purports to encourage serious discourse on social issues.

After reading and re-reading the article, I asked Justice Freedman's secretary to provide me with copies of the decisions and orders in the *McCain* case so that I might review them. I was told that Justice Freedman offered these documents to Mr. Hellman but that he declined to pick them up.

Interestingly, with a minor exception, higher appellate courts have affirmed Justice Freedman's rulings. If her view of the law as it pertains to the rights of the homeless were so extreme, as the article asserts, one wonders why it has been accepted by higher courts.

Mr. Hellman omitted the crucial fact that the two parties to *McCain*—the city and the Legal Aid Society—have consented to two court-appointed special masters to mediate and negotiate the bulk of the issues presented in this difficult and complicated case. Thus, many of the orders that Mr. Hellman claims are so unfair to the city were entered into with its consent.

Lewis Rosenberg
New York, N.Y.

Peter Hellman responds:
Mr. Rosenberg is correct that Helen Freedman's rulings have been upheld on appeal, with the exception of her order to force city officials to sleep in the Emergency Assistance Unit. That's because existing state regulations, born in the liberal 1980s, were unrealistic. When the state finally issued new regulations demanding minimal standards of behavior from sheltered families, Freedman blocked them for over a year. What's more, until the Court of Appeals rules on the momentous issue of a constitutional "right to shelter," an activist judge like Freedman has plenty of leeway to impose her will on the city.

I'm aware of the special masters but was not impressed by a report they delivered to Freedman, which to my eyes might as well have been written by Legal Aid's Steven Banks. Not only did it propose unrealistic goals for building more homeless housing, but it actually had the gall to propose a new tier of "no-frills" housing for recipients who refuse to behave in current shelters. Still, it is my understanding that the special masters are currently serving as helpful intermediaries between the city and Legal Aid.

Judge Freedman did indeed offer me, over the phone, copies of her orders and decisions. I wasn't aware that she'd actually had a packet assembled for me. But by that time, I'd already amassed over 5,000 pages of transcripts, orders, and decisions.

Fixing Albany

To the editor:
Eric Lane's indictment of the New York State Legislature ("Albany's Travesty of Democracy," Spring 1997) is persuasive

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and compelling. He describes marginalized representatives who must plead their case to staffers and sloppy laws produced by weary legislators in an end-of-session daze. Such a situation truly makes a cruel joke of representative democracy.

While Mr. Lane's case is convincing, his solutions are politically naive. He suggests that committees demand more autonomy. Any committee chair who tried to assert such power would be removed and relegated to an attic office without computers, adequate staff, or extra salary. The suggestion that voters demand reform at election time has been touted by nonpartisan good-government groups for years. Barring an unforeseen statewide scandal, it is unlikely that voters in all 211 legislative districts will make legislative reform a top priority in 1998.

The State Constitution provides a remedy that might work, however. Every 20 years New Yorkers must be asked the question, Shall there be a convention to revise the constitution and amend the same? If voters say yes when the question is posed this November, it will give New York a chance to craft a structure of state and local government that meets the needs of society in the twenty-first century. If voters say no, the constitutional question will not be presented again until 2017.

Marjorie Shea
New York, N.Y.

Code Words

To the editor:
Allan Demaree's impressions of the revised National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics are both puzzling and distressing ("(Social) Workers, Unite!" Spring 1997). As chair of the NASW committee that drafted the revised code, I want to correct several misstatements.

Mr. Demaree misreads the code when he asserts that social workers ignore the need for individual responsibility on the part of their clients. In fact, professional social workers are committed to helping people help themselves. The code clearly states that "social workers seek to enhance clients' capacity and opportunity to change and to address their own needs."

Mr. Demaree attacks the social work profession for opposing racism, poverty, and injustice. We do not apologize for advocating social change and trying to alleviate human suffering. Our conviction that lasting solutions require changes in both individuals and the environment is based on nearly a century of experience helping real people solve real problems.

Social workers' understanding of cultural diversity enables them to serve clients more effectively. It does not constitute, as Mr. Demaree assumes, an "anything-goes" attitude. The code clearly states, "Social workers are cognizant of their dual responsibility to clients and to the broader society. They seek to resolve conflicts between clients' interests and the broader society's interests in a socially responsible manner."

I would encourage Mr. Demaree to take the time to discover what social workers really believe and practice. I would be delighted to give him a guided tour.

Frederic G. Reamer
Code of Ethics Revision Committee
National Association of Social Workers
Washington, D.C.

Allan T. Demaree responds:
What is "puzzling" is Mr. Reamer's effort to obfuscate points he readily conceded when I interviewed him. For example, he agreed that the code tended to cast clients in the role of victim ("a fair characterization") and placed little emphasis on helping them assume personal responsibility for their actions ("Yeah, it's not real prominent . . . absolutely true"). In exhorting social workers to promote social justice, he said, the code's thrust suggests that "we've got to change the system. We're not going to change the person." Finally, summing up the code's politics, he declared: "Look, this is clearly a left-leaning document, to be real blunt about it . . . . I don't think anybody would deny that."

It's too late to change your mind now, Mr. Reamer.

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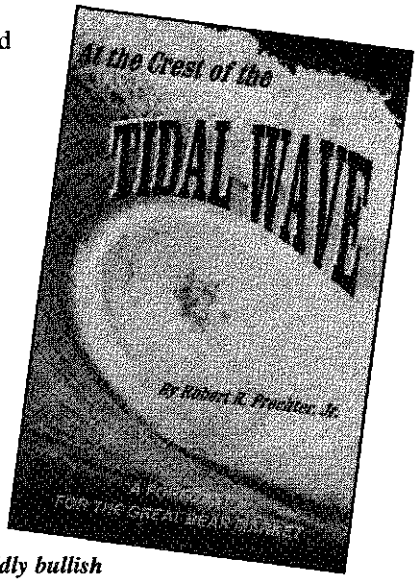

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Theodore Dalrymple is a physician who regularly sees patients in an English prison. He is a contributing editor of *City Journal*, a columnist for the London *Spectator*, and a frequent contributor to the London *Daily Telegraph*.

John J. DiIulio Jr. is director of the Partnership for Research on Religion and At-Risk Youth, an adjunct fellow of the Manhattan Institute, and a professor at Princeton University.

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Julia Vitullo-Martin is a political scientist who co-authored the first federally funded studies of Catholic schools in the mid-1970s. She is the editor of *Breaking Away: The Future of Cities*.

Bruce Davidson, a member of Magnum Photos, has had two one-man shows at the Museum of Modern Art. His books include *East 100th Street*, *Bruce Davidson Photographs*, *Subway*, and—most recently—*Central Park*.

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Overheard

Julia Vitullo-Martin

Taking a seat on the Broadway local last February, I noticed three African-American youngsters bouncing around the subway car, laughing, talking, and punching one another.

Thirteen years old? Maybe fourteen? It was hard to tell, decked out as they were in their huge Tommy Hilfiger outfits—all legs, enormous feet, and loud voices. Their things took up several seats, but as other passengers streamed in, the kids would politely pick up their down coats, backpacks, gloves, and boom boxes to make room.

They were boisterous, hollering back and forth, shifting from frivolous to suddenly serious matters—noisy but oddly thoughtful. I was on my way to interview Peter Flanigan, an investment banker active in the new School Choice Scholarships program, which helps low-income parents in the city pay tuition for their children at Catholic and other private schools. I had been checking my tape recorder to make sure it was working, and realized that I should leave it running.

Here is their conversation, mostly shouted happily. I don't know their names, so let's call them Tom, Dick, and Harry.

Tom: "Hey. Gerald's about to get hisself expelled."

Dick: "Gerald? But he be studying all the time."

Tom: "It ain't about studying stuff; it's about eyebrow stuff."

Harry: "What's with Gerald's eyebrows?"

Tom: "I don't know. He's at the Catholic school, and they got all those rules."

Dick (patronizingly): "Oh, *man*! That ain't about eyebrows. That's about mustaches. Gerald's got those little hairs coming up, and he wants to keep them. The Catholics don't allow no mustaches."

Tom: "At the Catholic school, they don't allow nothing. No earrings neither."

Dick: "Earrings? Sheee-it! No jewelry. No gold. *Nada*."

Harry: "No shorts."

Tom: "No T-shirts."

Dick: "No colors."

Harry: "No jeans."

Tom: "No caps."

Dick: "No cell phones."

Harry: "Hell, no Walkmans!"

Tom: "No box cutters."

Harry: "Man! You crazy? You even be thinkin' about cuttin' someone, and they throw your ass outta there."

Dick: "Man! I'd kill myself if I had to go that school!"

Tom: "Oh no! They'd kill themselves first if you went to their school."

Harry: "Nah, they wouldn't. Those Catholics would just expel you. They don't fool around."

Tom: "Yeah, you got to go to class or they expel you."

Harry: "Yeah, and you can't talk in class or they expel you."

Tom: "Yeah, you be rude and they expel you."

Dick: "It's *hard* there too."

Tom: "Yeah, Gerald studying Latin."

Dick (jokingly): "They don't even speak that nowhere. Not even in those Latin places."

Long silence.

Dick: "So what's gonna happen to Gerald? He be happy there."

Harry: "Don't worry about Gerald. His mother's gonna let him go along, hoping he do the right thing. Then if he don't, she'll make him cut those little hairs off. No ifs, ands, or buts with Gerald's mom."

Tom: "Is that constitutional?"

Dick: "Naaah. That's why you better off at the public school. At least there they behave constitutional." ●

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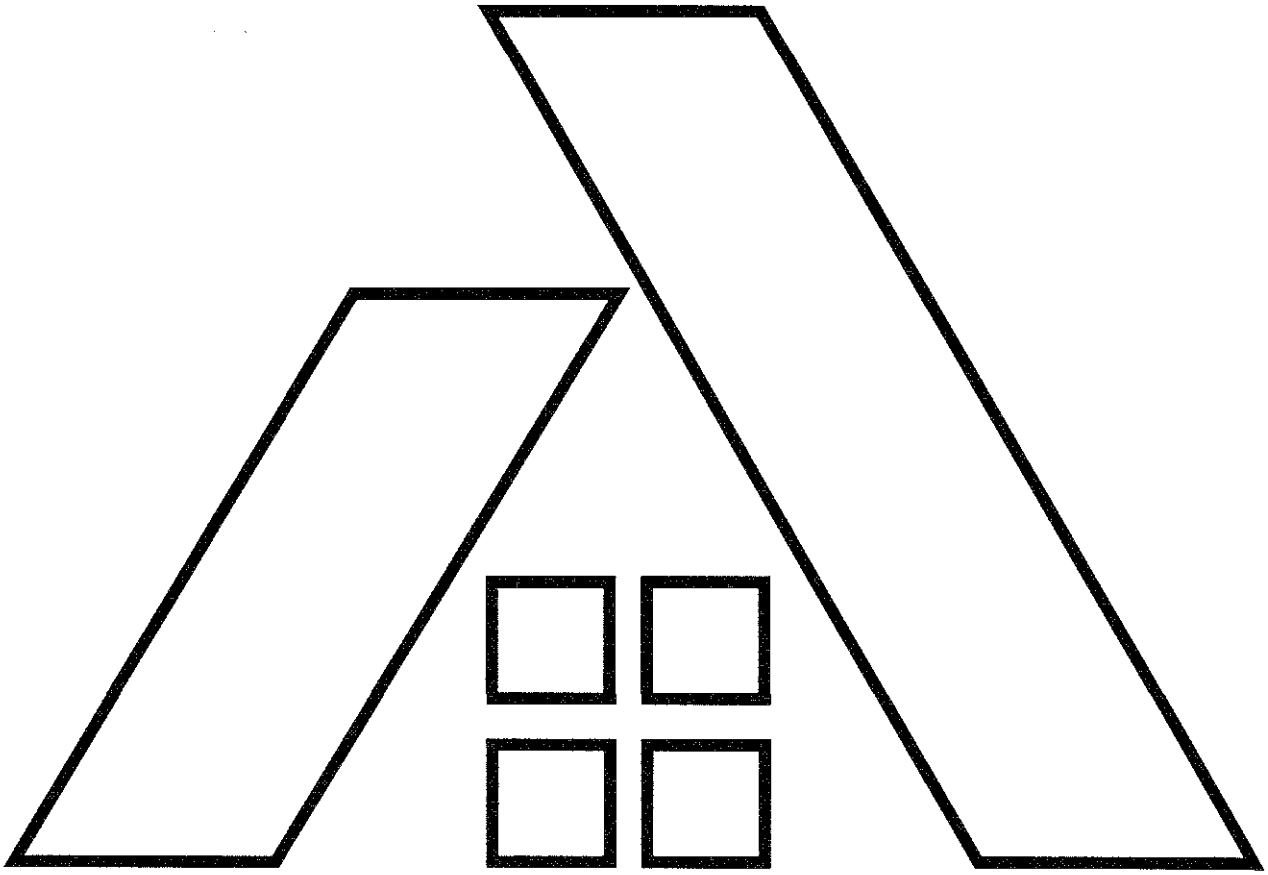

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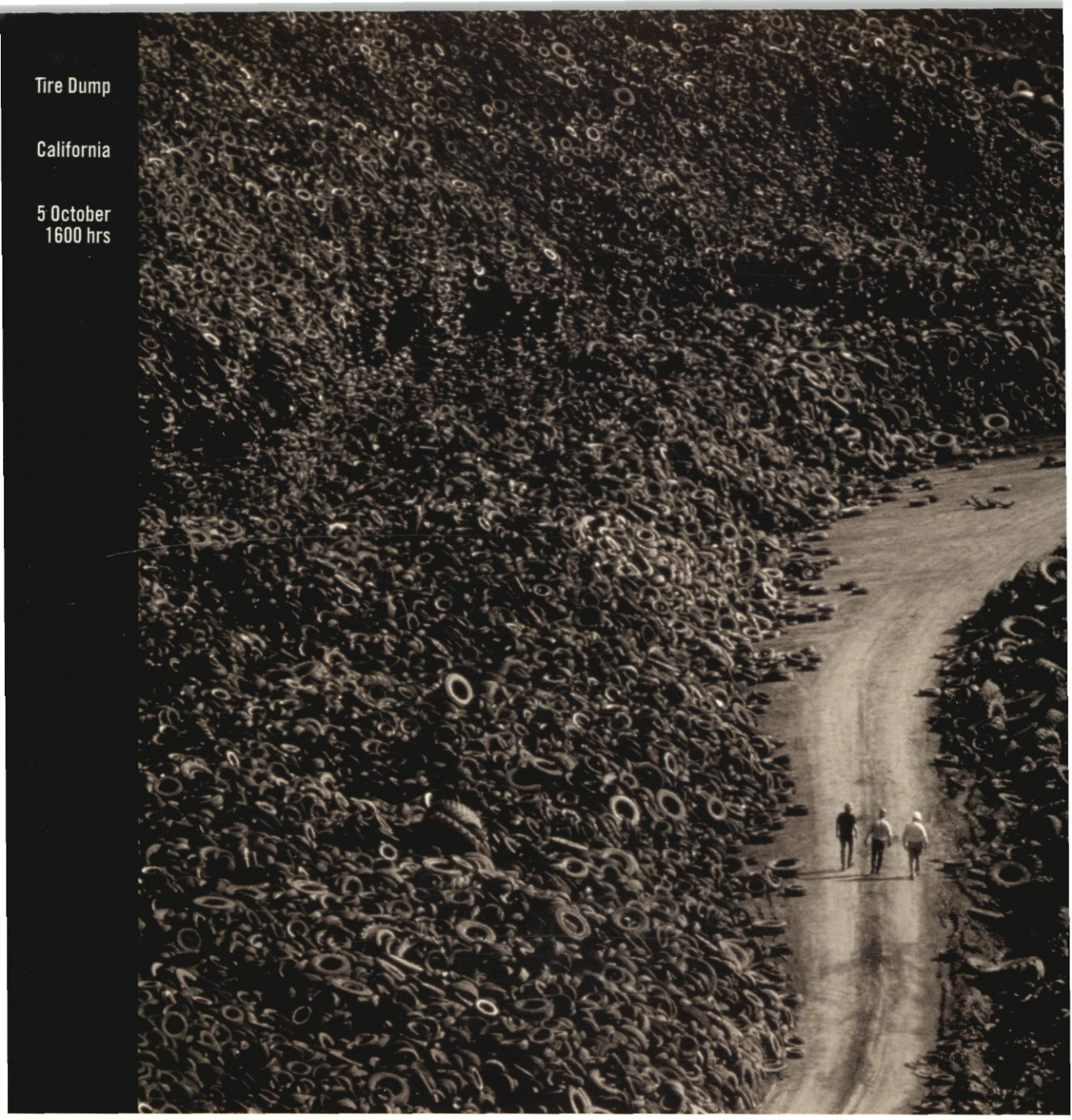

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